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A STORY

OF

- Life on the Isthmus.

BY JOSEPH W. FABENS.

"Whether we lay in the cage or the stall,
Our sleep fell soft on the hardest bed;
Whether we cooped in our rough capote,
On the roughest plank of our gliding boat,
Or stretched on the beach, or our raddles spread
As a pillow beneath the resting head,
Fresh we woke upon the morrow.

We were of all tongues and creeds,
Some were those who counted heads,
Some of mosque, and some of church,
And some, or I miss say, of neither;
Yet through the wide world might ye search,
Nor find a mother crew, nor blither."

Sage of Corinth.

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TO

Amos B. Carmine, Esq.,

AMERICAN CONSUL AT PANAMA,

For his gallant conduct at the battle of BUENA VISTA, and the
efficient services rendered his Country and the cause of
humanity in assisting to maintain the Laws at Panama
when an insurrection had threatened to disturb
the public peace and safety, and destroy
the friendly relations existing between
our Government and the Republic
of NEW GRENADA,

NOT LESS THAN

AS A TOKEN OF BROTHERLY AFFECTION AND REGARD,

THIS VOLUME

Is Respectfully Inscribed.

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P R E F A C E .

"By seizing the Isthmus of Darien," said Sir Walter Raleigh, "you will wrest the keys of the world from Spain." The aspiration of the days of Elizabeth has become the fact of our own. Decrepid old Spain did indeed long since loosen its palsied grasp of this land of wealth and promise; but it was not until Anglo-Saxon enterprise strode over it, that the world saw upon its front the nascent lineaments of a great empire. The wonderful change which has been and is yet to be wrought upon the surface and in the character of the people of this country, will one day form a very interesting chapter in the history of adventurous enterprise. For the present, anything which tends to shed light, however faint, upon a point to which so many eyes are turned in hope and admiration, the writer conceives will not be without its value.

It is not, nevertheless, pretended that the following pages are fraught with any special brilliancy—a modest disclaimer which the reader will perchance think wholly uncalled for under the circumstances—made up of disjointed sketches, drawn roughly enough with such materials as were at hand during rude voyaging, aiming not at any depth of coloring or sentiment, the book will doubtless remind some of those canvas daubings, termed Panoramas, wherein much is seen for a small amount; but which, it is to be hoped, if lacking in those grand touches which only a master can produce, do yet serve in their way to convey to the hurried gazer a sort of floating idea of the beauty or richness of the real scene.

And, furthermore, so trivial are the incidents, so superficial the view of character and life herein displayed—necessarily so where people live only as it were *en passant*, where the depth and earnestness of home-life is entirely wanting—that a much readier pen might well falter in its attempt to give any interest to scenes so barren of material. A land, too,

"Where the rose never blooms on fair woman's wan cheek;"

about which cluster in the minds of many the most melancholy associations : which travellers approach with dread, and look back upon with trembling ; has rather too strong "a scent of mortality" about it to awaken any great warmth of enthusiasm or poetic fervor in its description—

"For dangers uncounted are clustering there,
The pestilence stalks uncontrolled ;
Strange poisons are borne on the soft languid air,
And lurk in each leaf's fragrant fold."

But the scenes portrayed in the ensuing pages (and this is the only point upon which the author relies in palliation of his offence) belong now mostly to the past. A new leaf in the character of this portion of the popular route to California has been opened : where but recently the slow boat toiled up against the swift current of the river, or the languid mule dragged his weary feet over the rough mountain passes, the iron horse snorts defiantly as he rushes on his undeviating course. Yet a few short years and what is herein written will perchance be read merely as a pleasant fiction. Perchance, too (and should this ever prove to be the case, the writer feels that it will not have been wholly in vain

"He wore his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell"),

on some far future rainy day, some child of a coming generation, navigating wearily through his father's lumber-garret in quest of strange adventures, shall stumble upon a copy of this work which the unappreciative trunk-makers have passed by, and while poring over its pages shall believe with childish credulity that all which he finds therein recorded really happened ; and then reviewing in his little mind the many blessings which took their rise in golden California, and like a generous river made the countries fertile through which they rolled, shall feel a glow of admiration and gratitude towards those brave pioneers who, amid so much hardship and self-denial, founded the great Empire of the West.

It may be proper to add here, as an explanatory note, that the succeeding pages, though not necessarily connected with or hinging upon any preceding ones, were nevertheless originally composed as a kind of sequel to a work entitled "THE CAMEL HUNT."

Life on the Isthmus.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE IN DISHABILLE.

WE saw Chagres under peculiar circumstances. At the time of our arrival there the California fever had reached its extreme height, but was still raging with unabated fury. Every day some steamer or sailing craft from our Atlantic cities, and occasionally one of the latter class from some French or English port, would enter and disgorge its mass of eager life upon the sandy point, and hurry back again for a fresh cargo. I doubt if ever slave ships, in the palmiest days of that hellish traffic, were crowded to the extent of some of the Chagres packets during this period of the California immigration.

It was a strange and exciting scene to look upon. Frequently after coffee in the morning I used to stroll down to the point, and watching my chance for a seat upon the piazza of the Empire City Hotel, would light my cigar, and gaze for hours unsated upon that wonderful kaleidoscope of human life. No romance that I ever read possessed for me

half the interest of that ever-changing scene. In the forms before and around me, all nations, ages, and conditions of life were represented, and in such grotesque, and, for the most part, uncouth costumes! Seeing them thus huddled together, the rude and the gentle, the young and ruddy, and many another decrepid with age, the man of robust health and the tottering invalid, "the tender and delicate woman" and the boisterous ruffian of the lowest class, the virtuous and the vicious, of all grades and conditions, meeting for once in life upon a common ground, about to take from thence a common departure with the same physical end in view—alike in that one thing, but so different in all else—seeing all this, I felt sometimes a chilly questioning at heart as to whither this state of things was tending. There seemed to be a general breaking up of the accustomed forms of life, a disappearance of old land-marks; and I found myself inwardly asking, if in this lack of the sanctities of home, the quiet intercourse of friends, and all that is tranquillizing and ennobling in literature, science, and art, there was no danger that somehow in this rude and unavoidable intermingling of the purest and vilest, characters might become confounded, and the soul, wanting its accustomed food, lose something of its better nature, and allow "climbing impurity to stain the empyrean." The depressing state of the atmosphere, and the great avalanches of clouds that every now and then came rolling down the hill sides, hiding the green slopes, and deluging everything to the core, doubtless contributed to this mood of mind. But such grave questions seldom troubled me long—how could they—in Chagres?

There was also a comic side to the picture. The unaccountable style in which all were permitted to dress totally prevented a recognition of a person's grade, and gave rise to some misunderstandings; a retired judge might be accosted

as a boatman, and an ex-Governor from the States was equally subjected to be taken for a porter. People seemed in some cases as much surprised at finding themselves there as at anything else; and cast doubtful glances at the steamships outside, wallowing and rolling in the swell, hardly willing to acknowledge to themselves, that they were the same craft that looked so gallant and inviting at their piers in New York. Occasionally there were some droll rencontres, when one would see the countenance of a friend emerge from beneath a coarse black and white Chagres sombrero, or above the glowing folds of a red baize shirt. "Hilloa," was the general salutation, "you here?" which was ordinarily answered by a similar interrogatory more emphatically uttered, "*you* here?" What else indeed could be said under the circumstances? Mild looking men, inoffensive quiet people by nature, were straying upon the beach in the character of brigands, with a belt or sash about their waist, stuck full of pistols and bowie knives, on the *qui vive* for those attacks which had been predicted by their quondam neighbors; and exemplary young and middle-aged men, hurrying to and fro on all sides, showed plainly by their gait and gestures that they had "corrected the water of Chagres river" much too freely. Here would be a party of four or five, all talking to the same "native" in as many tongues, and the said native, nowise abashed at not being the proficient in languages which he was taken for, putting all five off quietly with his invariable "*poco tiempo*;" and there would be a foreign set, French doubtless, seated in the stern sheets of their "dug-out," just leaving to go up river, cosily eating sardines and tossing off their bumpers of claret to the inspiring notes of a polka, which one of the party was performing on a brass horn. There are always some torpid-livered people in every crowd, as a kind of ballast to the

spirits of the whole. On this particular occasion one of these fellows observed, that "the music would be pretty well out of that *mounseer* before he got to Gatoun," which another followed up by saying that "he reckoned that chap's horn could be bought cheap next morning;" whereupon a very bad-looking man clinched the whole matter by observing with an oath that "that fellow would dance over his grandmother's grave."

It was a great place for the study of character. On stepping ashore at Chagres men instinctively shook off the crust of conventionality, and came out *in propria persona*. I have heard that a ship brings out a man's true character, and the same is also affirmed of a prison. I think, however, that in our time the palm must be ceded to Chagres. There was in this place such an exquisite refinement of bad lodgings and worse fare, such an affluence of buggy cots, and such a poverty of wholesome bed-clothing, such filth on the levee and the beach, and such a sickening stench in the air—oh, but it was a fine place to bring out the salient points of a man's character! To be jolly under such circumstances, one would think would require more than the philosophy of even Mark Tapley. And yet there were jolly folks at Chagres—aye, even among the residents; men who did not live, but clung as it were desperately to the very tail-end of existence; there were some cheerful, if not happy, standing by their post as nobly as any warrior of old, or any Casabianca in the annals of song.

And these same gold-seekers, in their *outré* guise, with all their absurd misconceptions, their petty fault-findings, and their fretful impatience, had about them, on the whole, an air of troubled grandeur that was really heart-touching. Whatever might have been their respective aims, hopes, or prospects, they were all wanderers on the earth. They all had

the seal of inquietude set upon their faces, of which the querulous Childe says,

“This makes the madmen, who have made men mad
By their contagion.”

Whatever might have been their respective troubles or diseases, they were all drinking the same bitter cup of medicine. Some were there to gratify a morbid restlessness of body, some urged on by a hungering of the soul for change amid excitement which

“But once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest, a fever at the core
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.”

Others had left home blind to the rosy smiles of children, and steeled against the passionate sobs of loving wives, resolved to be back, if there was any faith to be put in man's best endeavors: any just God in the high heavens to drive for ever the wolf from the fold of the tender objects of their love: and others still had come hither from a harder necessity, because they were a burden in their own homes, and would have gone anywhere rather than longer have met glances so changed in those whom they still loved. And yet another and more melancholy class than any of these, because more incomprehensible, were those who sought here a refuge from themselves, from their own wicked thoughts, content to spend their days amidst all physical hardships, “to sleep amidst infection,” to die rather than go back to the solitary companionship of their own souls.

Over and above everything else one great feeling predominated in the minds of men at Chagres, an impatience to be away. People no sooner landed on the beach than they

were busting round to be off again. They all seemed to dread that one moment of too long delay, when the malaria poison should enter their blood, and laugh defiantly at the cunningest remedies. Yet this very feeling, so antagonistic to kindness and courtesy, to the credit of our nature be it said, diffused a sentiment of brotherhood throughout this incongruous mass. Men gazed shudderingly at the too significant hillocks everywhere visible, and looked into each other's faces, saying pitifully, "and *you* may be the next;" adding with an inward tremor, "or I—and may need your assistance in the last offices to my humanity."

"But some are dead, and some are gone,
 And some are scattered and alone;
 * * * * *
 And some are in a far countree,
 And some all restlessly at home;
 But never more, oh, never we
 Shall meet to revel and to roam."

These lines, from the "Siege of Corinth," immediately succeeding those which I have chosen as a motto for this work, convey to my mind so truthful an idea of the probable final disposition of this caravan of human beings, that I have no inclination to enter into a description of their more common-place characteristics. How could I ever hope, by so doing, to give any accurate idea of the wonderful panorama to which I have but alluded? It will be better and more becoming in me to proceed at once with my plain, matter-of-fact narrative, leaving analysis and generalizations to more skilful pens.

Amid this chaos of moral life, there were, nevertheless, some drifting fragments of a better state of things occasionally to be discovered, and these won the eye of the observer as much by their rarity as by their own inherent beauty.

CHAPTER II.

VALE AND PARKINS.

ONE morning I was sitting at my usual place of resort on the piazza of the Empire City Hotel. It was rather a livelier day than ordinary—that is, I mean livelier on shore, for there was a fresh northerly wind blowing, which so tore up the surface of the sea and caused it to break so furiously upon the bar and beach, that the boatmen, in spite of their restless and daring spirit of activity, had not deemed it prudent to venture out. There was a rumor current on the point that one boat had started for the steamer *Georgia* early in the morning, and been capsized in the breakers off the second point beyond San Lorenzo, and that all on board had perished. This might have been true or not, but no one cared to run any risk in investigating the matter; the lost, whoever they were, would never be missed in Chagres, and as for the suddenness of their departure, why, it was not thought of, while so many were dying just as suddenly in our very midst.

There were three steamers outside, waiting passengers; and the large number collected to embark, and the momentary arrivals of boats down the river with passengers also homeward bound, gave a brisk aspect to the social features of life on shore. There were, besides, not a few unfortunate individuals, who had arrived at Chagres by these same steamers, and who, from various reasons, had not yet got away, on

their journey across the Isthmus. These two classes of people possessed great interest for each other, for while the outward bound had much to ask of the returned Californians, and hung upon their words as if their future life were being shaped by them, and even looked with a kind of religious awe upon their mud-soiled garments, and haggard, toil-worn faces, these latter, in turn, regarded their questioners with looks of mingled pity, wonder, and contempt. It seemed so strange to them that men having good clothes to wear, ruddy complexions, and homes where they might have stayed, were hurrying impatiently to get a sip of that same cup of hardship and self-denial which they had thought to have almost drained to the dregs. They had forgotten what brought them out in a similar manner, it was so long ago, and so many more recent and doubtless more palpable troubles had been theirs. But the "dust" of these same returning gold-hunters was a greater argument in favor of taking their past course, than anything they could adduce to offset it, because, in the minds of the outward-bound, as one of them convivially observed, it went right home to the part affected, like champagne after sea-sickness.

It was a lively day, and yet it would not have been lively anywhere but in Chagres; and even there, there was a dreariness, a baldness, and discomfort about its liveliness that modified it very much. There was less rain than usual that morning, but still enough to keep everything in a very undesirable state of dampness. In walking in from our camp, I had been saturated sufficiently to take the chivalry pretty well out of any man. But I had afterwards crossed to the native side of the town, to purchase some eggs and chickens for ourselves, and corn for the camels; and seeing everybody else in the like situation, had come to take it, as indeed I did everything at that time, as a matter of course.

As the day progressed, the gale increased. From where I sat, there was a fine view of the sea and beach ; but if the reader should now visit Chagres, he would find a great change in this part of the town : many new buildings have been erected between where the Empire City Hotel then stood and the sea, and the view from its piazza extends now but to the opposite side of the street. At this time, however, I could see as far as our camel encampment on the left, with a high range of hills shutting in the view beyond, the long beach, the landing point in front, and the sea, stretching to the horizon, bounded on the right by the hills and fort of San Lorenzo, and terminating in a gentle slope leading to the native town, between which and my point of survey flowed the Chagres river.

I shall not soon forget how gradually but steadily the wind kept rising that day, and how the great sea heaved and thundered beneath the touchings of its mighty hand ; how the rough, hairy breakers doubled and redoubled in size and fury, lashing the resounding shore with their white and out-spread arms, and how men came down to gaze at them as at a bristling army that hemmed them in from all they loved, and clasped each other's hands convulsively, glad to know that there were others in the world as insignificant and lonesome as themselves. The steamships in the bay rolled till you could see their decks as plainly as if you were on board ; and boats were torn from their fastenings, carried out by the retreating waves, and again whirled up high and dry upon the beach. There were some old wrecks along the shore, through whose worm-eaten decrepit timbers the sea came rushing with a perfect howl, writhing in and out of portholes and scuppers in long tortuous lines like angry serpents ; and men gazed likewise on these black, sepulchral wrecks, and shuddered

again, and looked back beseechingly to the merciless ocean, and their quiet homes seemed further off than ever. The bluff where the fort stood, was an especial mark for the sea; and its dark, slimy rocks, as they emerged from each struggle with the tempestuous waves, looked each time blacker and more defiant. But on the bar, what a perfect madness of waters! There was something awful about it—as if all the many bones which the sea had ever stolen from the warm, green earth were moving in their deep beds, and had contributed something to its ghastly whiteness.

I was smoking and looking about me—now in contemplation of the turbulent scene, now in studying the equally turbulent forms of humanity grouped around, when a man, somewhat remarkable in all the crowd, presented himself before me. He was a tall, long-limbed, loose-made man, with a large head, and a profusion of sandy hair and beard. He was attired in a suit of pepper-and-salt doeskin, with a wash-leather money-belt strapped outside about his waist, and ornamented with a pair of revolvers. He wore a light felt hat, with a broad brim, similar to those extensively used in California. But he was no returning gold-seeker. It was easy enough to see that, in the newness of his garments, the exposure of his money-belt, the ominous presence of his pistols, and particularly in the fresh, ruddy style of his countenance. He had a remarkable face. It was large, and each feature had its share; and his beard, which looked, indeed, more like a mane than a beard—the lion's part. There was nothing else about him that resembled a lion very much, except his name, which I afterwards found out was Sampson—Sampson Vale. He looked complacent, voluble, good-natured, fickle-minded, easy to take as well as give an affront, a lover of a certain kind of etiquette nevertheless, and, on the whole, rather addicted to the milkiness of human nature. Such, at all events, was,

as nearly as I can recollect, my first impression of the man. There happened to be a chair vacant at my side, which he very coolly settled into, and, laying his right hand upon my left knee, looked me full in the face, and inquired if I belonged to the camel party.

I replied in the affirmative.

“Do you know, sir,” continued he, raising his hand from my knee, and stroking his beard therewith, at the same time smacking his lips as if in internal relish of the sentiment he was about to utter, “do you know, sir, that I have a good opinion of that enterprise?”

I replied, that never having had the pleasure of seeing or hearing of him before, I was really not aware of it.

“It is nevertheless a fact,” continued he. “As our acquaintance is of short duration, I suppose that it will be necessary for me to inform you that I was educated as a blacksmith”—

“Are you the learned blacksmith?” inquired I, interrupting him.

“Why, not exactly,” said he, “the fact is, I am a blacksmith by profession—but, like many people in this world, I don’t always put my profession into practice.”

Here he stopped, seeming to have lost the thread of his discourse, and smacked his lips for some moments with infinite relish.

“Since leaving my trade,” resumed he, when he came to himself, “I have been into a little of everything, and ought to know something about the world.”

“Ought, indeed,” observed a small-sized man standing by his side, whom I had not before observed; “but you never will, for you’ll never stiek to any one thing long enough to get more than a smattering of it.”

“Solomon Parkins,” said the sandy-haired man, rising to

his extreme height, and looking down pitifully on the shorter individual at his side, at the same time stroking his beard and smacking his lips with an appearance of deep-seated self satisfaction. "are you aware, sir, that in attempting to injure me in the estimation of the world, you are rendering yourself supremely ridiculous?"

"See here, old Quanto," retorted this modern Solomon, "nobody is deceived by that affectation of superiority on your part. So, in future, when you speak to me, please to lay aside that fatherly style, and recollect that the firm of Vale and Parkins is dissolved, and that the junior partner is equal to the senior any day!"

"Poor Parkins," observed Vale, in a tone of well feigned commiseration: he then whispered in my ear, "but you will please to excuse this in him; for the poor fellow is a little—a little—you understand—wandering like in his wits."

I saw that I had "struck a vein," as the Californians say, and took a more minute survey of my new acquaintances. The first, I now remarked, in addition to what I had already observed, had a rapid restless manner of glancing about him, as if he took in everything there was to be seen, and seized at once upon its more palpable features. There was no repose in his countenance to indicate that he was weighing in his mind the intrinsic worth or uses of what his eyes saw, much less that he was suggesting to himself any possible dark side to the picture. His companion, for companions they were, and of long standing, I saw at a glance was run in quite a different mould. Although he probably had nothing of the old Solomon about him but his name, yet it was very evident that he was provided with a *con* for every *pro* of his former business associate. He was attired in a similar manner to his partner, even to the pistols and felt hat, from which fact it was fair to suppose at first sight that he could

not help entertaining a kind of respect for his opinions, which nevertheless troubled him as a weakness repudiated by his better judgment.

As I afterwards found out, these men had been in business together as blacksmiths some years previous in a town in Maine, that the former had been the active manager and financier of the firm, and that in consequence of his speculative tendencies and absurd habits, complete ruin had gradually overtaken them, in the words of Parkins, "of course." That they had then dissolved their business connexion, and since then, Mr. Parkins had been adrift on the world, his naturally gloomy disposition seeing so many obstacles in every new adventure which presented itself, as to discourage him from entering upon it altogether; while Mr. Vale, on the other hand, with his buoyant character and addiction to the speculative, had dipped into a hundred different enterprises, but always with the same unsatisfactory result. And yet although Parkins lost no opportunity of "showing up Vale," as he expressed it, and never ceased to reproach him as the cause of all his misfortunes, yet having been once within his influence, he had found it impossible to withdraw himself; and so followed him in all his mad or visionary speculations, as a kind of unofficial, junior partner, living in an atmosphere of sombre retrospections, and drawing sustenance from a source which must have sadly affected his digestion. If Vale had been a man of thoughtful, brooding temperament, he would have looked upon Parkins as his evil genius, destined ever more to haunt him, a gloomy shadow always eating into his life's sunshine; but as it was, he regarded him merely as an unpleasant mosquito, or blue-bottle, buzzing about, and occasionally butting against the polished surface of his character—a troublesome little object to be sure, but one that could easily be brushed away.

We were now joined by a third party, a man equally tall with Vale, but thick-set, hard-featured, and with black hair and beard. He might have been a Californian or anything else that savored of the desperate. He was a bad-looking man.

"How about the snake?" inquired he of Vale.

"Oh, all right," answered Sampson. "I left him safe in his basket, but I am a little in this way about the snake business,—that is, I am in this way between the snake and the camel business." Here Mr. Vale held out his right arm, and placing the palm of his hand perpendicularly in the air, moved it regularly from right to left, and *vice versa*, intending to hint thereby that he was in a state of indecision on the subject, or rocking gently between the two.

"I'll satisfy you on the matter," said the man.

"That won't require much," observed Parkins, with a half sneer, "but what are those objects floating in the river and drifting towards the bar? They look to me like human bodies."

"Carcasses!" observed the bad-looking fellow brutally. "They're not worth saving. If they had dust in their belts they wouldn't float. But come, it blows too much of a snorter here, let us go round to the Irving and look after the snake. Drink anything?"

I declined the invitation at once, from an unwillingness to drink with such a wicked-looking man. Parkins had evidently a desire to indulge, but did not dare to undertake it without the example of Vale, who also declining, the snake proprietor stepped up to the bar alone. His manner of calling for liquor was characteristic. Putting on his sternest expression, he fastened his glance upon a timid young man among the waiters, and throwing down his dime, said in a measured Websterian tone, "Let it be plain brandy and water."

✓ We picked our way through the crowd round to the Irving House. On ascending to the sleeping room, where were some hundred plain cot beds, in an apartment resembling the garret of an Irish shanty, we were conducted by Vale to his cot, beneath which, he informed us, was the pannier containing the snake. With the crooked handle of a cotton umbrella, which he pulled from amongst his luggage, he proceeded to fish out the basket into daylight, but the snake was gone.

"Stepped out, by Jupiter!" said Vale. "Just my luck;—Hilloa! any of you seen a rattlesnake about nine feet long loose in this chamber?"

This cool interrogatory was addressed to some eight or ten saffron-visaged invalids, occupying as many different cots, in the various stages of Chagres fever. How far the electric shock thereby communicated to their debilitated frames helped to kill or cure, I cannot say. One poor devil, evidently near his end, raised his weary head, and looking at us with a glassy eye, inquired if he heard aright, and if it was really a rattlesnake we were in search of. On being answered in the affirmative, he pointed his thin, pale, skinny hand towards an india rubber clothes-bag, leaning against a cot, immediately alongside of where Parkins was sitting.

"There is one," gasped he faintly; "that black-whiskered man put him there on guard. It's strange enough, but, oh, thank Heaven, that I'm not delirious!"

"You miserable vagabond!" yelled Parkins, as he sprang from his seat, giving us a full view of a fine specimen of the scaly brown and white rattlesnake of the tropics. "You old humbug of a Quanto Valley that you are, don't you see you've like to kill me with your confounded speculations?"

"Solomon," observed Vale in reply, "moderate your emotions, and don't make a fool of yourself before strangers."

"Yes," remarked the snake-tamer; "Yellow Jack speaks true; seeing your clothes-bag out in this unprotected style, I put the snake on duty. This is one of the uses to which the animal can be applied, and in this he has no superior."

"Beautiful design!" exclaimed Vale, glancing at Parkins with a triumphant air; "they will be invaluable on the Isthmus and in California, and I should not be surprised to hear yet of rattlesnakes being put in charge of baggage on the railroads in the States."

"With the Anaconda," observed the man of serpents, calling off the rattlesnake from his post of duty, and allowing him to coil upon his arm, with his head downwards, towards his hand; "with the Anaconda we shall do greater things. This reptile, as you are probably aware, is possessed of great fleetness. He can likewise be trained to run in a given direction. In the carrying of letters and such valuable packages we can make him of great service."

"There's for you, Solomon," observed Vale, patting Parkins affectionately between the shoulders. "Anaconda Line across the Isthmus! Through before breakfast! How does that strike you, eh, Solomon? I am afraid, sir," continued he, turning to me, "that your camels, though doubtless well disposed beasts, are a little behind the times."

While Mr. Vale was indulging in this bit of enthusiasm, and annihilating space thus freely in his own mind, the wicked snake-tamer had, by various little devices, such as pinching and pricking the snake, excited him to the requisite degree of rage, and raising his hand to Vale's right shoulder, as the latter concluded his remarks, let out the snake upon him in such a decisive manner as caused him, Vale, to yell with excruciating pain.

"Oh, I'm bit! I'm bit," roared he, "help, and be quick with it, or I shall die!"

Then it was that Parkins, forgetful of all the little matters of difference between them, and looking only to the salvation of him who had once been his counsellor and friend, lost entirely what little quantum of wit he ever possessed, and rushed at random among the cots, calling upon somebody, anybody, to saw off Vale's leg, or fetch an emetic, or do something else likely to be of equal service in the cure of a venomous bite.

Meanwhile, Sampson lay in his last agony upon the cot, tossing to and fro, his countenance already changing and becoming spotted, and frothy saliva running from his mouth; there he lay, gazing beseechingly upon the dark-visaged snake-fancier at his side.

"Enough of this," said the latter at length, with a kind of disgust in his tone; and turning Vale over upon his back, he applied his mouth to the part affected, and drew back the poison which was already dissipated in various parts of the system. He stayed a moment while his patient recovered in a measure his wonted quietude, and then carefully replacing the rattlesnake in his wicker pannier, bade us a courteous good morning, and went off down stairs.

"I am glad he is gone," said the sick man, who had first pointed the snake out to us, "not that there was any fear of his biting *me*, but when a man's moments are few, and he needs all his last thoughts for God and himself, it somehow disconcerts him very much, to know that there is a live rattlesnake within a few feet of his bed."

Ye who are about to die at home, in the midst of your family and friends, with everything made soft and tender to your aching limbs, with every harsh sound hushed about you, and every wish gratified almost sooner than expressed; think of this Chagres death-bed—for it is no fancy sketch.

Vale recovered as speedily as he was taken; Parkins also recovered—his wits.

“Solomon,” said I to him aside, as I was going off (his Christian name was so fitly inappropriate, that one could not resist calling him by it); “this would be a good thing for your old partner, if it would learn him not to meddle with what he doesn’t understand.”

“All creation couldn’t do that,” returned Solomon, “I couldn’t myself.”

And as if to prove the truth of this remark, Sampson Vale thereupon straightened himself up in bed, and thus delivered himself:—

“Solomon, my lad, that was well done, eh. If I could only learn that dodge, we’d make our fortune in the State of Maine alone. I’d draw out the poison, and you’d be the man to be bitten!”

CHAPTER III.

A LIFE SAVED.

ON returning to the point I found Tom, who had come in from the camp to hunt me up, as he said, and notify me that dinner was nearly ready.

"One of those chickens that you sent out by El-Sta," observed he, "was condemned before going to the spit. Mrs. Wallack and your wife were present at the opening of him; and his breakfast, consisting of two centipedes and a scorpion, still lay in his stomach undigested. I suppose they did not want to eat a dyspeptic animal, as they immediately ordered the fowl to be thrown away. In lieu of him we are to have a dish of green lizard fricaseed."

"Where is the Major?" inquired I.

"You know very well," replied Tom, "that he never leaves the camels except for the woods. What a keen eye for sport he has to be sure! and how he revels in the bosom of this voluptuous nature! He is as fond of the bush as you are of the town. Now, do you know what he said to me this morning, as I was complaining of our delay in this cursed hole? 'Tom,' said he, 'a man that don't enjoy himself at Chagres, is a disgrace to human nature, and a libel on the Almighty.' Such a complimentary thrust as that, of course, was a clincher."

"Our cold-blooded and barren New England natures," said I, "are little fitted to sympathize with the impulsive

temperament of one born and reared, as the Major has been, among the glorious wild woods of Kentucky."

"I should think," continued Tom, "that he had never lived anywhere else. Why, I have seen him lie for hours on the damp grass of the woods, watching the birds at their occupations or sport among the boughs, or straining his eyes to catch each particular shade of their varied plumage, as they shot across the only line of sunshine that had ventured down that lonely path. And I have seen, too, his eyes glisten, like the green and gold scaly feathers on the breast of the king-hummers, as he calls them, when in some more venturesome wheel of theirs he has discovered something which he had not previously seen, 'some new beauty,' as he terms it. Of course he has a right to enjoy himself as he thinks proper, and prefer his fifty varieties of the humming-bird even to the golden cock of the rock, and the crimson and purple-crested chatterers, if he will; but I must say, I should think better of the Major's taste if he did not treat my parrots and toucan quite so cavalierly!"

"What do you think of the weather, Tom?"

"I think, if this wind lasts much longer, we shall have to up stakes, and move our camp back to the Indian village. The spray comes at times as far as the old trees, and makes the camels fairly wince under it."

"No damage done yet, I hope?"

"Well, none out there; but I must tell you of a laughable affair which occurred on the beach a few minutes before you returned. You recollect that small panel house, which was bought by my protégé, Bill Smith, and which he had erected in the rear of old Joe's house, there?"

"Certainly, and called the Camel Restaurant."

"Exactly, in honor of our quadrupeds. Well, one of those outrageous rollers, which you sometimes see, made a

rush for Bill's hotel, and, not being founded on a rock, as you are aware, it was swept away. It happened that Bill and two or three others were inside at the time. When the establishment was found to be fairly outward bound, they crept forth, amid the shouts of the crowd. By the aid of a coil of stout rigging which was fortunately at hand, they were all safely landed. Just as Bill was coming out of the surf, his natural love of the theatrical prevailed. Turning to his retreating house, now in a score of pieces, he immortalized himself as follows: 'There goes the homestead—and Jim Wilkins's boots with it—

“And now I'm in the world alone,
Upon the wide, wide sea—
But why should I for others groan
When none will sigh for me?”

The effect was beautiful: particularly as not one in a hundred of the crowd had ever read Byron, and the lines were, consequently, credited to Bill, as a happy effusion of the moment.”

“Your protégé will probably now fall back upon his original idea, of returning in the Double Eagle?”

“Yes,” said Tom, “Bill has decided to take the back track. He has seen the tip of the elephant's tail, and don't care about a further acquaintance with the animal.”

It may be as well here, for the gratification of those readers who like to see things through in every particular, and who take an especial interest in the pecuniary results of adventure, to state that our vessel arrived at Chagres at a very favorable moment for a return freight. There was, as I have before said, a large number of returning Californians, seeking passage to the States. With the lumber which had served for the camel stalls, we fitted up the

vessel's hold for the accommodation of seventy passengers, and as she lay inside of the bar, almost touching the levee in fact, the desired number was easily obtained. I will merely add as a mercantile fact, that these passengers paid fifty dollars a head—a pretty good business for the owners you will allow—and so dispose of the Double Eagle once for all. Not that I am weary, either, of the pleasant associations which will ever cluster about the memory of her voyage, or cease to think of her as floating always in an atmosphere of pleasant sunshine, with some of the desert sand still lodged in the fibres of her rigging, and the seams of her deck ; but our life while on board her was a dreamy and fanciful one, and we have now come to deal with hard realities.

It was about time to think of returning to the camp for dinner, and we should accordingly have taken up our line of march thitherward, had it not been that, at that moment, there was every appearance of the approach of rain—even while we had been talking, the whole sky had become overcast and leaden, settling gradually lower and lower, and hemming in the horizon on every side, till we seemed to be sitting under a dark, shadowy arch, within which none of heaven's sunshine had ever come. Its radiation blackened the sea, save where it gave a pallid hue to its whiteness, and made the shore look dark and sombre, and changed also the countenances of men. Beyond its visible sides, the mutterings of the thunder made one think of huge vapory monsters bellowing in the black forests of cloud-land. And the great breakers, equally monstrous, now that they seemed shut up within the same gloomy confine as ourselves, were perfectly frightful to listen to, as they roared in such solemn madness up the beach. There was no chilliness attending this onset, yet men closed their

lips firmly, and buttoned their garments to their chins, as if to fight a subtle enemy. At last it struck, dancing gleefully with its million feet, upon the ragged surface of the sea, trampling over the roofs, and bristling up against the sides of houses, or hurrying headlong in close array down the channels of the street. And now God help the invalids under those same roofs, for there is not one of them but has his own particular rivulet, to give a chillier cast to his discomfort; and God help those who are on the river, among whom there may be women and children, for a thousand streams are rushing from the mountains to swell its tide, which will soon run like a mill-sluice, and drifting trunks of trees and snags, and fearful eddies at sudden bends, are hard things to navigate amongst. And those poor devils, who have no change of clothing (and there are many such here), who are liable to lie down to-night in their wet garments on damp beds, and wake in the morning with an ague that shall stick to their bones for years, are they not also to be pitied and prayed for?

“Sail ho!” shouted a voice, as the vapory mass dissolved itself, and disclosed the old horizon far out seaward—a strange cry at such a time, and a hazardous navigator it must be, who would not claw off a rock-bound coast, with the devil’s own roadstead at the best, in such a gale, and with dirty weather to boot. It was nevertheless no false alarm; a large ship, under reefed jib and close reefed top-sails, was bearing directly down for the anchorage. She came upon our vision opportunely enough, stepping with such a fearless gallant air into our storm-drenched circle, another connecting link with the bright world away. As she rounded to before dropping anchor, careening in the process till her yard-arms touched the water, and showing upon deck the usual crowd of passengers, she displayed at her mizen-peak the glorious tricolor of sister France.

I love the French!—I love them, not because of their great name in history, nor of the noble monuments of art and science which they have scattered along the annals of their whole national existence, nor wholly because of their unquenchable love of liberty and their dashing spirit of adventure, but for their genial, generous soul; because they have an eye for everything that is bright and beautiful; because they are the apostles of cheerfulness, and in whatever circumstances we meet them contribute so much to make the weary days of our life seem gay and lightsome. If a man would find the most direct road to my heart, let him come in the name of Lafayette.

Landing at such a time was, of course, not to be thought of by any sane mind; and yet, if my eyes did not deceive me, preparations for that purpose were going on. Yes, there is a boat on the lee side, with two oarsmen already in; and there is a third descending by the man-ropes. A desperate set of fellows, certainly!—they must be short of provisions, and are going alongside of one of the steamers for a supply. But no—they head for the shore! Can it be possible? It is but a frail skiff—the captain's gig, probably, and we can only catch a glimpse of her now and then, as she rises like an egg-shell on the very crest of a towering sea. She comes on gallantly, guided by no tyro. And yet, what folly to have made the venture! for they must certainly lose their boat, and, unless expert swimmers, will all go to the bottom together. Bravo! she comes on well; that fellow is a worthy countryman of those who never flinched while “following the imperial eagle over the Alps.” She is heading directly for the fort. She will soon be among the breakers!

“Men there!” said a small, spare, pale-faced fellow, coming out of the hotel, “who'll go with me in a surf-

boat, for a rescue of those crazy-headed fellows? Talk fast!"

But not a man stirred.

"A free grog bill at my hotel (for this young man was landlord of the "Empire City"); lodgings while you stay, and anything else you may want into the bargain: only come on!"

"Take back that offer," said Tom, springing to his feet, "and I'm with you for one!"

A dozen others immediately presented themselves. The landlord picked out a tall, sandy-haired man; and saying two were enough, hurried down to the boat. To my surprise, this second man was Vale.

"There goes the venturesome old fool," said a voice at my elbow, which I need not inform the reader belonged to the ex-junior partner.

Recognising me, he tapped my shoulder cautiously, and whispered in my ear, "But we must make allowances for Signor Quanto; for do you know, that in reality he's crazy as a coot?"

"Why do you call him Quanto?" said I. "That is not his name."

"No," replied Parkins, "his name is Sampson Vale; but the conceited old scoundrel bought a book in New York entitled 'Spanish in Six Lessons;' and having studied that day and night on the passage, of course considers himself a proficient in the language. You can hear him any hour of the day dickering with the natives on the beach, always beginning his remarks with 'Quanto Valet.' That is why we have nicknamed him thus; not so bad either, considering that *valley* is a kind of short for Vale."

But the boats. The Frenchman's is already on the edge of the bar, and the helmsman sits in the stern-sheets as coolly

as Napoleon in the saddle at Marengo. And our gallant young landlord is likewise nearing the other edge; he is standing, and steers with an oar. They are approaching each other like knights at a tournament; but the white, roaring, seething gulf is between them.

Heaven help us! the Frenchman is in. Ha! a rudder is a feeble thing in such a caldron; she twists and twines like a serpent. But see, something has broken; she is off in the trough! angels of mercy, she is over; they are lost!

Not quite, for they are not in deep water, and the oarsmen are already clinging to the rocks under Fort Lorenzo. The helmsman, where is he? All right. He is on his legs, with the sea showering him like a cataract. But he is a fellow of nerve, and will weather it. There he goes over, under. O God, he is lost!

Stay, there is the surf-boat within her length of him; she is climbing the same breaker that knocked him under; she is bolt upright on its perpendicular side. See, she rises to it, and floats again with her bows deep in the brine. There is no Frenchman to be seen; he must have carried something heavy about his person, for he has gone down. Hurrah! there he is; haul him in, boys! Nine cheers for Quanto Valley! Give it to him, boys, and raise the dead!

Yes, at the young helmsman's command, Sampson Vale had hitched his oar, and his old sledge-hammer arm never did better or prompter service. In an eye's twinkle, as it were, the Frenchman was safely deposited in the bows, and Sampson hard at it again on the long and strong stroke. They pulled out into the comparatively smooth water, where our young hero of a helmsman shifted his oar end for end, and by a use of the same dexterity which he had already shown, recrossed the bar in safety, and with gentle strokes the boat came slowly up to the point.

I think it is the author of the "Bachelor of the Albany" who says, "the delicate spirits of earth are the bravest." The landlord of the Empire City Hotel was a young man of a frail and almost effeminate form, an Italian by birth, but educated in America. He had the elegant classic profile and curling hair peculiar to his countrymen, and would have been called rather pretty than handsome. But he had the bearing of a prince, and the fire of a thousand furnaces in his coal-black eye. His name was Angelo Vitti.

When the Frenchman came to land, we saw at once that he was a man of a distinguished presence and resolute character. He seemed a little chagrined at having been the hero of such an awkward affair, or rather at having been the awkward hero of so gallant an affair, for his whole deportment exhibited a profound sense of acknowledgment to Vitti and his companions. As he turned to look after his brave oarsmen, who were now scrambling along on the opposite side of the river beneath the beetling crags of the fort, we saw that he had received in his fall a severe blow upon his head. The blood was flowing profusely therefrom, and it was probably in consequence of this that he staggered, and but for the timely aid of Tom and Quanto Valley would have fallen to the ground. At the direction of Vitti he was taken to the hotel.

A Chagres hotel makes but a sorry hospital. Vitti, however, had in his establishment rooms of his own, where it was said more elegance and comfort were to be found than in any other place in Chagres. It was also whispered that this suite of apartments was presided over by a sister of Vitti's, a beautiful girl, who was to him a kind of ministering angel, and kept in check, by her presence, the native desperateness of his character. For if the truth must be told, this young adventurer was a gambler, and, like many of his countrymen,

"sudden and quick in quarrel." Here was a nice bit of romance for you.

To one of these rooms the Frenchman was immediately taken, and I being at hand was the fortunate individual who was dispatched for a surgeon. As good luck would have it, my staunch friend Doctor G—— was at that moment on the piazza, and we accordingly went up together.

The room into which we were ushered, was an apartment redolent of elegance and good taste. I may not be able to describe its minute features, but its first appearance communicated to my frame an electric thrill of pleasure. It was as if I had shut my eyes, and there had come suddenly to my inner sense a sweet vision of home. We stepped from the rough boards of the entry, upon a soft and yielding tapestry carpet; the richly carved chairs, sofas, lounges, and pier tables, all of the choicest designs, the costly mirrors, the choice paintings, the vases, statuary, and flowers, the whole arranged with such an exquisite eye to pleasing effect, overcame us like a dream; for it seemed to our hungry and unaccustomed senses, as if there was an odor from the spirit of beauty, like that which diffuses itself from "spices, and balm, and myrrh," filling the apartment and overhanging it "like a summer cloud." Of a verity, the most delicious intoxication cometh not from the wine cup. There is a subtle essence of which men have sometimes quaffed too freely, which fires the brain, and sends them mad, and staggering about the earth. But I am too fast—

When we entered, the Frenchman was reclining on a sofa, and Tom stood by his side washing the wound, while Sampson Vale held the water basin. Doctor G—— examined the part affected, and pronounced the blow to be by no means a serious one, and that with quiet and suitable attention the unfortunate man would soon recover.

"Where is Vitti?" said I to Tom, "did he not come up with you?"

"Yes," replied Tom, "and he has gone to his sister's chamber, to consult about what is to be done with this wounded knight."

There were two rooms leading from that in which we were, one the chamber of Vitti, and the other occupied by his sister. From the latter, Vitti came forth as we were speaking, leading by the hand a young and beautiful girl, in whom it was easy to see the outward signs of a near relationship.

"My sister," said he proudly, presenting her to us.

I shall not attempt to give to the reader a description of the person of this gentle girl. Her image is so associated in my mind with the highest, holiest idea of a sister's love and devotion, that I fear lest I should mar its delicate lineaments by venturing on their delineation. A tender exotic from fair Italy, her outward frame was a true type of the exquisite beauty of her character.

"Lotta," said Vitti, looking towards the sufferer, "here is an invalid for you to nurse; take good care of him, and I think he may survive the effects of his recklessness."

"With much pleasure," answered Lotta, in the tenderest of tones, "if you desire it, dear Angelo."

She looked into her brother's eyes as she spoke, a look as calm, and pure, and peaceful, as that which the quiet stars shed down from heaven, and she saw not the glance of unfeigned wonder and admiration which the sick man cast towards her. There was nothing wrong about the look; it was the spontaneous tribute of a susceptible heart to woman's loveliness; and had she seen it, it would not have called the faintest blush of maidenly shame to her cheek, and yet I did not like it.

It was a presentiment hard to define. The countenance of the Frenchman was such a specimen of manly beauty ; there was something in his clear broad forehead and large soul-lit eyes, so proud and trustworthy ; there was not the vestige of anything mean, base, or sensual in his whole deportment, but something noble and generous, that spoke of the great, because good qualities inherent in the heart. If there is any truth written in human physiognomy, he was a man to be trusted, aye, even with the infinite wealth of a virgin's heart. But if he was not, then God help the world, for there is no outward mark upon his creatures by which we may know them—the good from the bad.

And yet I did not like this sudden recognition, on his part, of the girl's grace and beauty, for it seemed to me as if she were spiritualized by the position she had chosen for herself in life—a thing apart from earth—and I could not contemplate this possible connexion with it, even in the highest, purest form, without an accompanying presentiment of evil. I cannot define this impression, but I felt it not the less strongly because so vaguely.

It seemed that Vitti had experienced a corresponding sentiment.

“Lotta,” said he playfully, as we were all leaving to go down stairs together, “take good care of yourself, darling, as well as of your patient.”

She answered with the same heart-touching tenderness as before.

“Our dear father and mother are in heaven, Angelo. You know how they loved us while on earth. Did we cease to love them, or become in any way unworthy of their continued affection, would it not, think you, mar their eternal happiness?”

Beautiful Carlotta Vitti ! thy parents were indeed in

heaven; and thou, in thy loveliness and purity, wert not far from them.

We descended the stairs in a kind of stupor, like persons who had seen a vision. I was brought to my every-day senses by a piercing scream from Quanto Valley. The snake proprietor had met us on the piazza, and laid his hand familiarly upon Quanto's shoulder.

"Nay, don't yell in that manner," said he; "although by the insertion of my finger nails into your flesh, I could poison you as easily as a serpent. But be easy on that score. You are a brave fellow in your way, and to-day have done me a good service. Do you understand," continued he, as Vale looked a little bewildered, "in the rescue of the French Marquis de G—— you have done me good service?"

I shall never forget the desperately wicked expression of the fellow's face as he said this—Heaven and Hell! Hell and Heaven! And can it be that there is so little earthly space between the two?

CHAPTER IV.

MONSIEUR CRAPOLET.

“OH, but we went merrily” in our encampment by the sea. The few days that we spent at Chagres were by no means tedious. Our mode of life was as uncivilized and gipsyish, as the most ardent lover of the picturesque could desire. We certainly had enough to make us uncomfortable, shifts enough to make to get along any way, and we therefore enjoyed ourselves extremely.

The first night of our stay in camp had been a rainy one, and we immediately found out that our Arab tents were not the requisite style of dormitories for that country. We had, accordingly, the next day purchased in town some panel houses, and tarred canvas for covering them. By this arrangement we had plenty of lodging-room. Our cooking was done in the rear, the stove being set up beneath a roof of tarred canvas supported on sticks. We eat out of doors, in pleasant weather, squatting upon the grass in Arab fashion, and during the showers, anywhere that promised shelter.

It didn't, however, matter so much where we slept, as that we slept at all; or in what place we eat, provided we had any thing to eat, and cooked in such a manner as to render it palatable. As for sleeping, we had to do it whenever we could. There was no particular time set apart and consecrated to it—I mean among the multitude then at Chagres.

Their ideas on this subject were very loose. People who had broken away from the conventionalities of life in other respects, were not expected to conform to this very negative one of observing a particular hour for retiring to rest; and the result was, that we were often favored with company at a time when we were quite unprepared for their reception. Parties in quest of better accommodation than they had been able to find in Chagres proper, deluded by our lights in the distance, came thither, and were unwilling to be persuaded that we did not keep a hotel or house of entertainment. Marauding parties, who had found night hideous at the "Irving" and "Empire City," were instinctively felt at times to be creeping amongst the brushwood, or plunging into the river on our left, and occasionally made us certain of their actual neighborhood by firing off guns and pistols at inoffensive objects of natural history. The worst of all these unpleasant little coteries, were, I think, those who were addicted to serenading. Oh, the hours that I have lain, half asleep and half awake, wondering who it was that persisted so pertinaciously in his request to be carried "back to old Virginny;" and where was that poor girl Susannah, who was so plaintively coaxed to abstain from crying; and that cruel but "lovely Fan," why didn't she "come out to-night," and still these complaining longings? Yet to say that we did not rather like this state of things, would be hardly true. It was such an excellent representation of the pursuit of conviviality under difficulties, that not to have appreciated it would have shown a barrenness of spirit, to which I, for one, do not feel willing to plead guilty.

In the alimentary department, things were very unsettled. It was difficult, in the first place, to get anything to eat; such a hungry set as were these gold-seekers while *in transitu*, I believe the world never saw before or since,

They were, it is true, charged a high price for their meals, but then it was on this very account the more foolish in them to attempt to act up to the Yankee doctrine of getting their money's worth, inasmuch as what they did eat ordinarily, was, in one particular, like land in the state of New Hampshire, worth the most the least there was of it. But such as it was even, it was hard to get. It is true, there was a bullock daily slaughtered by a miserable specimen of human nature from Carthagena, who used to sell him, hide, horn, and hoof, and, it was whispered, an old boot or two into the bargain; but as I had observed that none of the Chagres residents ever partook of this luxury, we acted upon the hint, and likewise denied ourselves the same. But it is idle to tell what we didn't have; and 'it was certainly curious to see what we did have, and how we went to work to get it.

There was now and then an arrival from Jamaica or Carthagena, with turtle, chickens, sheep, yams, plantains, and the like. When this supply fell short, we made diplomatic visits from kitchen to kitchen of the various hotels; and if perchance a less ravenous spirit than usual had that day prevailed at table, we assisted to keep from spoiling the fragments which remained. At other times, we went on board vessels lying alongside of the levee, and sometimes succeeded in getting a junk of "old horse;" and, on one occasion—a fact, reader—a pot of baked beans! These things, united with what the Major brought in from the woods, and what we received as tribute from bivouacs in our neighborhood, kept us after a fashion.

Our hours for eating were, whenever we had anything prepared to eat. And here was a new source of annoyance, the preparing of our food. We had no cook, although our library boasted of a cook-book. Often a dish whose appear-

ance we had anxiously awaited, would present itself in such a questionable shape, that we dared not touch it. It had been prepared "according to the book;" only in cases where we did not have the ingredients required by the said book, we had sometimes substituted such as we did have, which altered materially the whole flavor and relish of the thing. But an acquisition was in store for us, which was to put things in this department on an entirely new footing.

I think it was some two days after the arrival of the French ship, that Tom and I were loafing despairingly about *home*, after an unsuccessful sally into the town for food. It was two o'clock; and we had that morning breakfasted at nine. The Major was in the woods, naturalizing. Our Moors were preparing a huge pot-full of their everlasting kes-coo-soo, a dish which they were never tired of.

"Tom," said I in a feeble tone, "our sole resource now is in the Major."

"Yes," replied Tom; "and a possible dinner off humming-birds is a very unsatisfactory prospect to look forward to."

"To think, Tom, that we have nothing in camp but the remains of a barrel of biscuit, two junks of salt pork, one ham, a few eggs, a little salt and sugar."

"Except the liquor," said Tom, mournfully.

"And four o'clock is coming, Tom."

"Yes," said Tom, musing; "and five—"

"Aye, and six, Tom."

A shout from the returning Major interrupted this spirited dialogue. He hove in sight through the bushes in the rear ground, and was accompanied by a portly stranger; the two being followed at a short distance by a very old negro. As they approached, we were pleased to see that the Major bore a string of birds; and that his companion, besides his fowling-

piece and ammunition, carried a large basket, which, from the manner in which it affected his gait, evidently contained something heavy. The old negro had also a struggling animal, which looked amazingly like a monkey, slung across his back, and a large pagara, or wicker basket, poised upon his head.

"Monsieur Crapolet," said the Major, presenting his companion.

"Messieurs, j'ai bien l'honneur," said Monsieur Crapolet, bowing with the easy off-hand courtesy of a Frenchman.

Yes, this was Monsieur Crapolet—a gentleman, it is true, of whom I had never heard before, but a man most worthy to be heard of, notwithstanding. In physique he was a large man, above the common height, and very portly. He had a broad full face, and a head bald upon the top, which shone when he removed his hat in saluting us, as if it had been varnished. His beard was closely shaven and well sprinkled with grey stumps, as was also the short crispy hair upon the sides and back of his head. He had the merry twinkle of a *bon vivant* in his small blue eyes; and a voluptuous style of mouth, about which lingered palpably some of the savory essence distilled from the many good things which had travelled that "red pathway." This very pleasant specimen of humanity was attired in a coarse blue hunting-shirt, hanging loose over a pair of white cotton trowsers, stout shoes of raw hide, and a broad-brimmed, dull-colored *chapeau de fantaisie*.

The Major, who had already made this gentleman out to be a character, informed us that he had invited him to make "one of us." Men are always gayest when on their last legs. With starvation awaiting us at the next corner, we nevertheless welcomed this additional palate to our midst, and Tom proposed to celebrate the occasion by a drink.

"Shall it be l'eau-de-vie?" inquired he of our new friend.

The Frenchman upon this challenge laid down his arms, and divesting himself of chapeau, powder-flask, and shot-pouch, observed that he should interpose no objection to our taking a small sip all round of that excellent "*eau que prolonge la vie, et que nous rends gai et joyeuse.*"

I need not say that this introductory sentiment of his completely won our hearts, and made us the more regret the lack of means for carrying out a hospitality which was so well received. I ventured to observe thus much to Monsieur Crapolet, who quite perfected his conquest over us by replying—

"*Soyez tranquille. I will take charge of the culinary department myself; I have a boy with me who is au fait in such matters—Thom, venez ici.*"

The old negro deposited his pagara and monkey near the "cook-house," and came tottering up to where we sat. He was a toothless, grizzly, decrepit subject. He was a "boy" doubtless, in the sense that he was far advanced in second childhood. I am not aware of any way of ascertaining with exactitude a negro's age, but I think that this boy must have been somewhere in the second century of his existence. So long, indeed, had his soul and body been together, that the one seemed to have lost entirely its influence with the other, for this boy had a habit of constantly spitting when he talked, and he always thought aloud, and of scratching his head at frequent intervals—little physical peculiarities which I am very sure a professional cook would not indulge in, if he was supposed to have any control over his bodily functions. In that very remote period when Thom had been younger than he now was, he had probably been somewhat of a hard customer, if one might draw any inference at all from sundry deep cuts across his cheek and shoulders, and the fact that both of his ears were considerably cropped;

even now, as he stood before us, he fairly crouched as if in expectation of the well remembered lash. His costume is easily described. It consisted of a pair of coarse blue cotton trowsers.

"This boy," said Monsieur Crapolet, giving the youth a gentle chuck under the chin, which sent his drooping lower jaw with prodigious force against the upper, and brought his face into a horizontal position; "this boy, whom I call Thom, an abbreviation of the English name Thomas, understands well his affair. *N'est-ce pas, Thom?*"

"*Oui, monsieur,*" said Thom. He was not so much a promising boy as an assenting one.

"*Eh bien, Thom,* we will to-day have for dinner"—and our new superintendent of the culinary department went on with a string of dishes, specified in the Creole dialect, which betokened something bountiful, if not nice. At the enumeration of each article, Thom inserted his assenting "*Oui, monsieur.*" For so negative a character, he certainly made a great use of the affirmative in conversation.

Monsieur Crapolet then stated that he had only one condition to make with us before entering upon the practical duties of his situation, and that was that he should be the supreme head of his department, and that no one else should interfere even to the extent of visiting the cook-house while in operation. As it has always been an article of my creed not to inquire too closely into the causes of any good practical result, this arrangement was quite acceptable, so far as I was concerned at any rate, and the chief and his subordinate immediately set about their preparatory labors. An additional piece of canvas was stretched perpendicularly across the front of the cook-house, at a considerable distance from the other buildings of our encampment. Behind this were taken the pagara, basket, and monkey. What was next done

I cannot say. The black curtain of tarred canvas hung heavy and impenetrable between us and the theatre of operations, and the mysteries of that place are yet unrevealed.

When dinner was fairly under weigh, as we judged from the savory odors which occasionally drifted outward to our domiciles, Monsieur Crapolet came forth, with his large, full face all aglow with pleasurable emotions.

"Ca va! ça va!" said he, rubbing his hands together, "we shall eat something good to-day—Thom est un garçon d'esprit."

"How does it happen," said I, beckoning him to a seat beside me, "that a gentleman of your talents and Parisian tastes is adrift in such a dreary land as this?"

"Ah," replied Monsieur Crapolet, "you have touched upon a delicate theme, in consequence of which we will take another coup de petit lait, for, voyez-vous, I have a little weakness on this subject."

"And so you are not a gold-seeker," said I, after we had each taken a refreshing sip of "petit lait."

"In me," said he, striving hard to suppress the rosy twinkle of his eye, and speaking in a melancholy voice, which came strangely out of such a bonhomie mouth, "you behold an unfortunate individual, who has left a land where they have interred all whom he once loved."

"Indeed," said I, trying to raise a tender tone, for in a robust gentleman of fifty this allusion was not so pathetic as I could have desired,—“an affair of the heart?"

"Au juste!" said he, laying both hands upon his bowels in a manner expressive of great pain, and which led me to think at first that our "petit lait" was not the right medicine in his case. "I am here because solitude, hardships, and self-denial—another petit coup of this excellent '*lait*,' if you please—are, as I was about to say, the true remedy for a

lacerated heart. You see, in my younger days I was a susceptible boy. Mon dieu, how my heart used to beat when a bright eye showered its radiance upon me! Sir, if you will believe me, a swan-like neck, or an elegantly chiselled foot, made my knees shake under me. Eh bien! in our village, for I was born in a small village near Paris, there were two demoiselles, between whom my heart was equally divided, Virginie and Mathilde—*un petit coup de lait à leur santé.*”

Dear, delightful Monsieur Crapolet, he is getting deep into pathos, but if he is not careful the constitutional bonhomie of his nature will run away with him.

“You see,” continued he, after fortifying himself with a copious draught, “that this was a harassing state of things. So terrible did this condition of uncertainty as to the preponderating state of my affections become, that I was forced to fly my country. In a far land, said I, my heart will become tranquil, and be able coolly to choose its future life-long companion. You may believe me, Sir, when I tell you, that I had resided seventeen years in Cayenne, French Guiana, before I fully made up my mind as to which of the two my affections most strongly inclined. It proved to be Virginie, —another *coup de lait*, *s’il vous plait*, à la santé de ma chère Virginie.”

“And it was in French Guiana that you made the acquaintance of Thom, our cook?”

“Sir, you are my friend. Thom, too, is an excellent boy, but I beg of you that you will not mention *him* in this connexion. Eh bien, after an absence of seventeen years, I returned to my native land with the intention of espousing Virginie, or, in the event of anything having happened to her, making Mathilde the happy companion of my bosom—and what do you think—I found them both——”

“Dead?”

“Dead! le diable—no, married!”

Here was a climax. I must certainly have mistranslated his remark about interring the objects of his love. I had a strong desire to laugh, and am sure that we should have had “an affair,” had not Thom at that moment announced the dinner.

It was served upon a table built in Chagres fashion; that is, upon rough pine boards laid athwart of empty barrels. We had soup to begin with, and various other smoking and palatable-looking dishes. We were all of us pretty hungry, and I believe enjoyed the repast none the less for its mysterious appearance. It was plain enough that Monsieur Crapolet had purged his bosom of a good deal of “perilous stuff” by his confession to me, for he now appeared as a polite Frenchman in full feather, helping the ladies to a bit of roast veal, some of the canvas-back, just a wing of fricaseed chicken, and the like; while the rest of us looked on in amazement, not so much at the variety of dishes which were produced by Thom at such short notice, as to find that his master had a name ready for each.

Now, reader, my belief then was, and still is, that our dinner that day, roast veal, mutton chop, baked duck, fricaseed chicken, stewed brains, petites patés, and whatever else we might have had, all owed its origin to that wounded monkey which I have already alluded to as having been smuggled by Tom behind the canvas curtain. And my reasons are, that, in the first place, he never appeared again in life. In the second place, a monkey’s skin and entrails *were* found the next day at a short distance from camp, directly in rear of the cookery, by a party of disinterested people, who brought the same to us for exhibition. And in the third place, visions of monkeys in the various stages of

frying, stewing, and roasting, came that night and capered gibberingly around my bed ; and afterwards I was transported as it were to a lonesome place in the woods, where was a coffin, and a gang of monkeys solemnly digging a grave for its disposal ; beneath the open lid of which, too, I shuddered at beholding the well remembered features of our toothless cook—and still later in the night I had a third vision, and another troop of monkeys,—the posterity, doubtless, of these former,—were dancing by moonlight in that self-same woodland spot, singing mournfully but gleefully a well-known Ethiopian melody ; and then I remembered that Thom lay buried beneath that green sward, and that he was the “ Uncle Ned ” of whom they sang as having died in that melancholy “ long, long ago.”

During the period that Monsieur Crapolet catered for our party, I think we eat about a monkey a-piece, besides lizards, mud turtles, salamanders, water rats, and anaconda steaks ; nevertheless, we did not complain of our fare. To have done so would have implied a non-fulfilment of the condition to which we had mutually bound ourselves. Mr. Sam Weller is recorded as having observed on one occasion that “ Weal pie was a good thing when you knew that it warn’t made of kittens.” On our part we went further, and devoured with a keen relish haunches of deer, which we were morally certain was but a kind of *nom de cuisine* for alligators’ tails.

I must also say, in justice to Monsieur Crapolet and his subordinate Tom, that other and plainer dishes were often set before us, and that if we partook of these doubtful viands it was because we preferred them—the greatest compliment which we could have paid to the magic of their cookery.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARATIONS FOR A START.

WE had now been in Chagres some ten days ; the camels were sufficiently refreshed after the fatigues of the voyage, to warrant an immediate undertaking of our journey across the Isthmus. We had taken advice relating to the best way of proceeding, and had come to the conclusion to try the land route. We were told that there was a good paved road, lying somewhere on the native side of the river, and continuing along on the same side till near the neighborhood of Cruces, where the stream was easily forded, and beyond which it connected with the old road from Cruces to Panama, which many of my readers have doubtless travelled. The great difficulty about this road seemed to be, the finding it. Some put it as commencing away down at Porto Bello, some as beginning near Navy Bay ; and others were firm in their statements, that it originally started from Chagres. But all allowed that we should hit it if we went back far enough into the bush. If there was any road at all, or any possibility of getting over the ground in this direction, we thought it preferable to trying the river, as the boating of our camels as far as Cruces would be a very expensive and tedious affair.

Accordingly, one fine morning, after a rainy night be it understood, we shook down and boxed our houses, struck our tents, pulled up stakes, and packed everything, including

the cooking-stove and fixtures, upon the camels (*chameaux*, Monsieur Crapolet used to call them). We then bade adieu to the ground of our sojourn, wending our way towards the town. I do not remember that I looked back upon the spot at that time, with any particular emotion. The remembrance of recent annoyances was then fresh, and I presume that the brisk action of our beasts rather led me to look forward with pleasant anticipations, than to an indulgence in sentimental regrets. But now, as I write, it is different.

That spot of earth, in its untamed beauty and luxuriousness, rises up before me like a picture. Yes, I am back again by the great sea-side, with the mountain brook not far away, rushing so passionately yet tenderly to its embrace. There are the old elms, and the long beach in the foreground, and the grand sombre mountains in the rear. There is the well remembered path through the brushwood, leading back to the Indian Village, and beyond, too, up a high hill, where I sometimes went with the Major, and from whence we could discern vessels below our horizon on the beach, bound, on the one tack, it might be to San Juan, or on the other, to Porto Bello. Beyond the river rises a steep rocky bluff, at whose base the waters were always white, whether milky in pleasant play, or livid with rage. And on the hither side is a shady nook, formed by willows growing out of the sand, where the washerwomen, who came from Chagres, were wont to deposit heaps of clothing, rich with the auriferous mud of the Yuba or Feather River. I see, too, the deck timber—fragment of a former wreck, which had been driven thus far landward, during some strong northerly gale, years before—now fixed steadfastly under the shade of these willows, upon whose ragged side, as worn, and weather-beaten, and ragged-looking men, had sometimes come and sat, peering over the deep, and blessing the hairy front which

also frowned or smiled upon their native shores. And the path leading to the town, the path that I daily travelled, in some places, winding back far into the bush, and again curving outward, so as to give a full view of the sea; no "primrose path," and yet much frequented at that time, rich in mud and slimy spots, but still picturesque from its luxuriant borders of alder, mangrove, and palatuvia, chequered as they were on either side with towering palms and coconut trees, with now a straggling ray of sunshine lingering momentarily aloft on their dark green branches, and anon a merry party of rain-drops playfully dancing over them in their downward tramp. These are some of the features of the scene.

Nothing remarkable in all this, you will say. Perhaps not, yet it was something to have the great heaving sea evermore at one's door, muttering like an old fireside crone of unfathomable mysteries; to see it during the long days, in all its many moods, and feel it so near, that one could lay his hand at any moment on its shaggy mane, to watch it darkening beneath the forecoming shadow of night, changing then its tales from the glory of proud navies that had ridden upon its bosom to the sad fate of manly hearts, and rosy smiles, that had sunk and been quenched for ever in its turbulent depths; and to wake during the still darkness or no less solemn moonlight, and hear it yet there, with a more melancholy murmur in its deep voice, as if the dead everywhere sleeping in its bosom, made restless moaning over their lost years of life.

There was an awful grandeur, too, in the recollection, that while all other voices of earth had changed or passed away, this world-reverberating music of the sea had been sounding on evermore the same from the creation; like a deep eternal undertone, stirring the soul in its profoundest depths.

Truly as well as beautifully, has England's woman poet sung :—

“ The Dorian flute that sighed of yore,
Along thy wave is still,
The harp of Judah peals no more,
On Zion's awful hill.

“ And mute the Moorish horn that rang
O'er stream and mountain free,
And the hymn the leagued crusader sang,
Hath died in Galilee.

“ But thou art swelling on, thou deep,
Through many an olden elime,
Thy billowy anthem ne'er to sleep,
Until the close of time.”

And it was something to know, that on the other hand were the hills, whose fastnesses man had not penetrated, but within whose deep rich glens, and dark shadowy jungles, masses of animal life were revelling and rejoicing, although to our dull sense they rose up silent, solitary, and forbidding—evergreen hills, upon whose summits or sloping sides no snow or ice had ever lain, but where vegetation bloomed and died and bloomed again, and presented always the same perennial front of verdure. It was curious to see how steadfastly but vainly the ocean kept sending its phalanxes of waves to overrun this green domain, and how sometimes the salt from its spray would lodge upon the branches of trees far up the hill sides, and their green leaves and clinging mosses would droop as if poisoned ; and then to see a friendly power rush out from its ambush in the skies—no less than an army of rain-drops, which would do their work so thoroughly, in purifying and cleaning these delicate

dresses of the wood, that each shrub and bush and dark old tree looked all the fresher and more sparkling in the next ray of sunshine which came thither. This water from heaven, in its kindly mission, found its way into the very thickest of the glade, and it was no uncommon thing to see masses of vapor in the early dawn which we might consider as its disembodied spirit, hovering about these green declivities, and gradually soaring heavenward. But why refer to all this—well enough in a poet, which I am not, or a child, which I can never be again: only to show the free and intense style of life which we then led. Because in the breaking up and absence of conventional forms we had seemed to get back nearer to the old mother nature, and lay as it were more tranquilly on her bosom. Our insignificant bodies dwindled as the face of the old mother grew warm, distinct, and loving. What if infection pervaded the air we breathed. Did we not, on that account, feel a kindlier interest in the stars, and the blue arch, and yet love the cheery earth none the less? Can a man evade death by being a coward; and where can he die so well as where sympathies from the infinite heart of the world seem to be drawing him thitherward?)

Often since, when stifling in close streets, with the faces of ungenial men hemming me in, or stalled, as it were, in a set form of daily life, a stupid routine of dull duties, have I looked back upon these wild scenes with an inward chafening and pining to be away. It has seemed as if I would give weeks, aye months, of this dull life for a few hours of that.

It has been objected to adventure, that it unfits one for the sober pursuits of life; but who on this account would shut his eyes to the picture of loveliness which the great Father, every morning and evening, unrolls afresh? and

how can he so well see and feel all its wonderful delicacy and eternal beauty, as by shaking off his native sluggishness, and going out in simplicity of heart and habits, to sojourn amid new and unaccustomed scenes? He is, indeed, a pitiful object to contemplate who can live amid the grand, and beautiful, and heroic, either in the natural or moral world, and be none the better for it.

“But this we from the mountains learn,
And this the valleys show,
That never will they deign to hold
Communion where the heart is cold,
To human weal and woe.

“The man of abject soul in vain
Shall walk the Marathonian plain,
Or thread the shadowy gloom,
That still infests the guardian pass,
Where stood sublime Leonidas,
Devoted to the tomb.”

There was no lack of heroism in the character of these sturdy, on-pushing gold-hunters; there was grandeur in the unrivalled hardships which they voluntarily endured in this stage of their experience, and sublimity in some of the attending circumstances, for daily at Chagres heaven's artillery thundered forth its salvos, and nightly its lightning flashes were the literal lamp of the voyagers mounting or descending the river.

“Something too much of this.” To go on then with my story: On reaching the point we found the few friends who were to come into our party, ready and waiting to receive us. Among these were Messrs. Vale and Parkins, the former of whom had decided, on the whole, that “the camel business was the best thing going,” and had fully made up his

mind to stick to it, until something better should present itself. This volatile gentleman was seated in the centre of a heap of baggage, and his conspicuous position would, doubtless, have helped to set off his native advantages, had he not been doubled up like Wordsworth's book-worm. In fact, he was just then engaged in opening a liquor-case containing several descriptions of cordials, besides gin, brandy, and old Jamaica. After drawing forth a couple of bottles successively, holding them towards the sun, and taking a small sip of each, he returned them to his case with a dissatisfied air, and at length produced a third, the color and taste of which seemed to suit. He first threw his head backward, with a jerk, then gave three or four twists of his wiry neck, as many stretchings of his lengthy arms, and at last cleared his throat with a hem or two preparatory to a generous draught. All this time Parkins stood by, looking on with a countenance in which disappointment, contempt, and anger were curiously mingled. When Vale raised the bottle to his lips with the deliberation of a man about to take a final pull, Parkins could restrain himself no longer; bending forward slightly to get into a posture which enabled his hand to reach the coveted flask, he struck it such a well aimed blow as sent the liquor into the nose and eyes, as well as stomach of the thirsty Vale, and then grabbing it as it fell, he, Parkins, stepped nimbly beyond the reach of his companion's sledge-hammer arm.

But the latter was in no wise disconcerted by the abrupt termination of his enjoyment. Rising up, he cast a mildly reproving glance at the retreating foe.

"Solomon," said he, in an affectionate tone, "how often shall I have to caution you against indulging in this love of strong drink!"

"Just hear him!" said Parkins, who had fortified himself

with no homœopathic dose, "he never drinks; oh, no, he tastes; except of course, gentlemen, when he has the bilious colic, and that's a complaint he's pretty generally troubled with."

The camels were kneeling, and we had left our seats to superintend the packing of our companions' baggage.

"Whose is all this?" said I, pointing to the heap of trunks, boxes, bags, etcetera, in the vicinity of Vale, "a formidable lot truly."

"That is some of mine," replied Vale, nowise abashed at the implied tenor of my interrogatory, "the rest of it is coming; I have got two natives in my employ since an hour, and nearly half of it is along already!"

"But it is not possible, my dear sir, that you have twice as much baggage as we see here; why, you have already a load for two camels."

"I told him repeatedly," observed Parkins, coming forward, "that he would never get it across."

"It is even so, nevertheless," reiterated the senior partner, "and I do not see that I can well spare anything; but let it be as you say, gentlemen, in that matter."

"What is to be done?" inquired the Major, for it was certainly out of the question to think of lumbering our camels up with this mass of things.

"Sell the superfluous at auction," said Tom, with the ready wit for which he was remarkable.

"Parbleu!" said Monsieur Crapolet, "Je n'ai pas trop—he can well divide with me."

Monsieur Crapolet spoke truly, for the heart of the generous Frenchman was his greatest possession. In point of worldly goods he had but his fowling-piece and ammunition, the contents of his basket, and Thom's pagara, whatever the latter might have been. But as his proposition did not seem to meet exactly the merits of the case, it was unanimously

voted that Tom's plan be adopted, and furthermore, that he should officiate as auctioneer.

When this decision was officially announced, Monsieur Crapolet produced a tin horn from the pagara of Thom, with which he proposed to call the amateurs together musically, on condition of his being allowed two drinks to our one. Vale, who had seemed by his looks to rather demur to the first proposition of Tom, looked even blanker at this second one of Crapolet, but it was carried notwithstanding, without a dissenting voice.

The first case opened, happened to contain books, and the first book taken out was Bowditch's Navigator.

"Here it is," shouted Tom, "a book which ought to be found in every well regulated family; contains particular directions about crossing the Isthmus, also how to make salt water out of fresh (sailors I mean, of course.)—Let's see; here is the title page—'Bowditch's Navigator, Mercator Sailing, short cut from Cruces to Panama,' &c., &c.,—lunar observations, world without end—how much is offered for Nathaniel!"

If my memory serves me right, "Nathaniel" was purchased by a swarthy native, who had evidently been pleasantly excited by the allusion to Cruces and Panama, for the sum of three dollars. The performances of Monsieur Crapolet upon the tin horn had been eminently successful. A crowd speedily collected about Tom and his wares, and the book sales went on briskly.

"The next work on the catalogue," said the auctioneer, "is this splendidly bound edition of Byron, with a life by Bulwer, as the Ethiopian poet says, no less beautifully than truly :

"Oh, Bulwer he wrote William Tell,
And Spokesheare wrote Oteller,
Lord Byron, he wrote very well,
But Dickens—he wrote Weller!"

"How much for this splendid edition of Byron?"

"Bee-rong!" shouted Monsieur Crapolet correctively. "C'est bien drôle que les Anglais ne peuvent jamais apprendre à prononcer même les noms de leurs poètes les plus distingués."

It is proper here to observe that Sampson Vale had up to this time been attentively watching the movements of the auctioneer, and had not remarked that Thom, at the instigation of his master, had removed the liquor-case from his side, and deposited it carefully within reach of Monsieur Crapolet. But this gratuitous observation of the latter had drawn our attention towards him, and to the great horror of Vale, there he was, this victim of a broken heart, reclining cosily upon a sea chest, with a brandy flask in one hand and a "petit verre" in the other, a perfect Jupiter of good humor and conviviality in the midst of his attendant gods, to whom Thom, with a second flask and "petit verre," officiated in the character of a venerable Ganymede. Strange to say, I noticed Parkins in this group of celestials.

While the Major was superintending the packing of the camels, I strolled up to the "Empire City," partly to get a fresh box of "Wandering Jews," and partly to say good-bye to its brave young landlord.

Vitti was in the dining-room of his hotel, seated at table in company with two others, card-playing. One of his companions was the French nobleman, Count de G——. I suppose the Count had been a winner at the time I entered, for on seeing me, he rose and proposed breaking off the game. This Vitti passionately refused to do, saying that he had lost everything but his hotel and land, and was determined to risk that for what it was worth. They played one more round, and Vitti was a poor man with not a cent in the world.

"Gentlemen," said he, rising, and looking steadily at the Count, "I am ruined ; but it was fairly done. You may consider me as your guest till I can find business."

"Nay," said the Count ; "my dear Angelo, this must not be. Keep your house and lands ; I do not need them. But for your generous aid my heirs would have been ere long in possession of my property, and you had retained yours."

"I scorn to receive pay," replied Vitti, "for doing what I should have been a wretch to have left undone. Nevertheless, for my sister's sake, I will continue here awhile as your agent, till I can repay you for your advances."

"Let it be for your sister's sake, then," said the Count.

The third party present, whom I recognised as the owner of the snake which had bitten Vale, smiled darkly at this arrangement, as if he saw something infernal in the transaction, which pleased him on that account.

"Vitti," said I, as I shook him by the hand on leaving, "this is a wild, lawless country. The only rule of action here, as you well know, is the barbaric one that 'might makes right.' We can't tell what may happen ; but if any trouble comes to you, remember that, for one, I am your friend."

"It's not for myself," replied Vitti earnestly, "that I apprehend anything, at least anything more than my deserts. I am but a reckless vagabond at the best ; my whole life has been a miserable mistake, and it's too late to try to correct it, even if I knew where to begin. But with my sister it is very different ; she is as pure and stainless as a little child. Now, whilst I live, I can protect her to the extent of my life. But if anything should happen to me—you know what I would say, sir."

"I understand you," said I, "and you may be certain that it shall be as you desire : only let me beg of you to be care-

ful of your words and actions for her sake, and not recklessly peril a life which has so much depending on it."

Vitti wiped the tears from his eyes with one hand as he shook mine nervously with the other ; and so we parted. On reaching the point again, I found the auction terminated, and several new features introduced upon the face of things.

CHAPTER VI.

EN ROUTE.

EVERYTHING was now in order for a start. The camels were packed, and the barges which were to transport them and us across the river were in readiness at the levee. This being the case, I was somewhat surprised to see the heaps of baggage belonging to Messrs. Vale and Parkins lying still upon the sand, and the camels destined for their accommodation freighted with other packages. It, at first, occurred to me that the former of these two gentlemen had become dissatisfied at the summary manner in which Tom was disposing of his mental food, or the not less summary disposition of his creature comforts by Monsieur Crapolet. I was, therefore, even more surprised to notice upon a second glance the tall figure of Signor Vale, a little apart from the group it is true, but surveying them with a loving and benevolent glow upon his face, and a certain fire in his eye, which flickered brilliantly as it roamed over the entire scene, the while his lips smacked approvingly in token of a most portentous inward satisfaction.

"My dear Vale," said I, approaching him, a little too abruptly perhaps, considering his exalted mood of mind; for I had really come to feel a liking for this curious man. "I trust that we are not to lose the pleasure of your company in our journey across the Isthmus."

"Pretty good!" observed Parkins, who, with a singular

perverseness of mind, evidently understood me as speaking satirically.

"Ah," said Vale, coming to himself, and calling in his wandering fancies with a jerk as it were. "Yes, yes, you speak truly. I shall not be of your party across the Isthmus. Are you aware, sir, that since you left us, but a moment ago, sir, in point of time, a great idea has come to me?"

"Quanto Valley," said Parkins, more savagely than the occasion seemed to warrant, "has had great ideas enough in his lifetime to have ruined the whole world."

"Solomon," returned his companion affectionately, "let me entreat of you not to parade thus the superficial character of your mind."

"As I was about to observe, it has occurred to me in looking over this sandy patch, seeing it in its present state, and reflecting upon its capabilities, that there are great things to be done here. The trouble thus far has been, I opine, the want of a head, one great directing power to see its wants, and with brains sufficient to devise ways and means to meet them."

"Say rather a heart," said a young man who had just joined us; "a great heart teeming with affection, a heart large enough to embrace all these weary people in the folds of its love. Let such a heart make its abode here, seeking nothing, thinking nothing, knowing nothing but the good and happiness of all around it; and do you not think that a bright radiance would go out thence, which would beautify this place even as thoroughly as it would purify it? Now you, sir, were no doubt thinking of draining these marshes, of establishing sanitary regulations, of laying out streets, of founding a hospital."

"Quite right, sir. You see that mountain but little over

a mile distant. Why we could lay a strap rail from thence to the point, put on our dirt cars, and with a few mules, we would bring this whole township high and dry on a beautiful slope. We should in the first place lay alongside of the alcalde and priest, secure a grant, then——”

“Lay alongside of the padre first, get *his* good graces, and I'll guarantee the rest of the jockeys.”

This latter observation proceeded from one of the two gentlemen, who, at that moment, had joined our group in company with Tom. The speaker, whom Tom announced as Judge Smithers, was a large robust man of florid complexion, short square whiskers, blue eyes, a broad head, large nose, and a mouth in which good practical common sense seemed to well up as it were spontaneously. This was the most remarkable thing about the man. He always seemed to have the very item of information or suggestion that was needed rolling upon his tongue, like a choice tit-bit, and had only to open his mouth for it to roll out.

His companion was presented as Colonel Allen, of Missouri. He was not so large a man as the judge, and had a staring kind of face, very red as if from hard drinking. His eyes were large, wide open, and considerably bloodshot; and his mouth, which was also large, was in like manner generally extended beyond its natural limits by an inveterate habit of grinning, which he had probably fallen into when quite young.

“These two gentlemen, and this third, Mr. Arthur Orrington,” said Tom, with a bow towards the young man, to whom I have already alluded, as having objected in a measure to one of Vale's great ideas, “are to join us; and their baggage is already packed in lieu of that of these renegades here, Vale and Parkins. But I am not the boy to interrupt a pleasant story. Pray go on, Mr. Vale.”

"I was saying," continued Vale, "when you came up, that there was a great chance for improvement here."

"I guess you hit it there," said the judge, who, as Tom subsequently informed me, was not exactly a judge in point of law, but was a great judge of horseflesh, and had run the first line of stages from Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico.

"The subscriber is ready to make affidavit to that effect," added the Colonel. This gentleman I afterwards learned was a printer by profession, and from his invariably alluding to himself as "the subscriber," am inclined to think that he had been mostly employed in the advertising department.

"Go on," said Parkins, anxious for his friend to arrive at a point where so great unanimity would not probably prevail.

"And, as I was going to say, that having filled up this back marsh here and secured our grant, we should proceed to survey and stake off lots, lay out streets, and in short make a regular land company affair of it. Then we should build a breakwater along here, from the point out, leaving a space between that and the opposite coast suitable for a good ship channel, which we should keep of sufficient depth by steam-scows—if necessary, spile the levee."

"Hold on, old boy," exclaimed the Colonel, "and allow the subscriber to observe, that, in his humble opinion, the levee here bears altogether too great a similarity to a decayed egg to lie in any possibility of spiling."

"Well done, Allen," retorted Judge Smithers, "for a San Francisco editor you are, certainly, wonderfully erudite. By spiling the levee, the *hombre* refers to driving spiles or stout sticks of timber along its banks to prevent caving. Where the 'dosh' is to come from to carry out this idea does not appear as yet,—but doubtless will."

"From New England, Sir, my native place," said Vale majestically.

"Whew!" said the Colonel, snapping his fingers, as if they were either burnt or tingled with cold.

The judge said nothing, but contented himself with humming a fragment of an old song, familiar to our childhood, beginning:

"When I was a little boy, I lived by myself,
All the bread and cheese I got, I put upon the snelf."

"I wish you joy of your mission," said Torr, "and hope you'll stick to it."

"You may bet high on that," concluded Parkins; "oh, yes, he'll stick to it like cobbler's wax to an ile-stone."

It was now time to be off. The bright sun was shining in a clear sky, and it was deemed expedient to take advantage of so unusual a state of things. We left Vale still under the exhilarating influence of his new idea, with Parkins buzzing his monotonous undertone of discouragement under his very nose. Perhaps after all, if our enthusiast had not had this outward, palpable drag upon him, his own nature might have furnished it inwardly; and so with harsh imaginings of possible difficulties and objections, have crushed and stifled its gossamer thread of life, whereas the estimation in which he held the mental character of his associate, rendered him quite regardless of his opinions.

I could not help observing, in the person of our new comrade, Colonel Allen, a remarkably reckless style of dressing and conducting himself. Whether I should have paid any particular heed to this at that time, I do not know, had it not formed so striking a contrast to the costume and deportment of Mr. Arthur Orrington. The latter gentleman had a mild, pale countenance, with a touchingly benevolent

expression, and a soft, affectionate eye. He looked like a man who had no business among the hard, rude, selfish things of life. His dress was scrupulously neat, and severely correct, in point of taste; so simple in fact as to suggest the idea of a ministerial character in the wearer. You would have known at once upon seeing him, that he had a fixed and certain character of his own, that was made to set its mark somewhere, perhaps gently, even timidly, but none the less firmly and durably for that.

Now the Colonel was got up in altogether another style. He had evidently been battered about the world, and was considerably the shabbier for it. It might have been that some great wrong done to him when young had broken his manly spirit, and made him careless of what fortune might have left for him among her stores; or, it might have been that he never had any particular character at all, and had fallen into rowdyism, as being the most easy and natural thing to do. He was one of those men who appear always ready for whatever the moment offers, the more outré and bizarre the occupation, the better; an entire contempt of anything bordering on etiquette or formality, and a perfect freedom from bashfulness or fear, were his prominent characteristics. He was attired in a seedy black dress-coat, with coarse grey trousers, a blue cloth vest ornamented with brass buttons, stout cow-hide boots, and a hat far gone in dilapidation. It was this crowning head-piece which gave the final touch to his faded and shabby *tout ensemble*, although, from the appearance of his nether garments, one might reasonably have doubted whether he were on his last legs, or merely in his last pair of trousers. Colonel Allen was, in short, the beau idéal of that numerous class, known as "people not well to do in the world," or "men who have seen better days." How many of this class do we daily meet, and how

few like Arthur Orrington; for the world is full of blight, and ruin, and decay; and modesty, charity, and unselfishness are the flowers which grow rarely among its noisome weeds.

We got our camels into the barges, and were seating ourselves to be ready for a start, but Monsieur Crapolet insisted upon Thom's serving out one additional drink. It is, perhaps, hardly fair in me to expose the fact, that our dejected Frenchman and his friends had already drunk the contents of five of the flasks in Vale's liquor-case, leaving but the sixth, which was now to be sacrificed upon the same altar of conviviality. It was a small square flask—as Thom poured the liquor into the quaintly-cut tiny glasses, it glistened and shone in the bright sunlight with a ruby-like sparkle. The rough conclave, whom the doubly bereaved lover had gathered about him, received each his allotted part with a reverential air, except, indeed, our unterrified Colonel from Missouri.

"An extra tot of grog," said he, as Thom handed him his glass, at the same time drawing one hand from his trowsers' pocket, and ejecting from his stained and reeking mouth a huge quid of tobacco; "the subscriber is open to conviction as to the quality of the liquor."

"It's some kind of French cordial," observed the Judge; "it takes the French to mystify us in the stomachic department."

"Nothing horizontal about it?" inquired the Colonel.

"I trust not, for your sake," replied the Judge.

"Messieurs," began Monsieur Crapolet, and there was a deep silence while he spoke; "c'est 'le Parfait Amour.' Whosoever drinks of this cordial finds therein a balm for a broken heart, for it begets within us a love for all the world. It causes us to forget the weariness of life, and helps us with a kindly arm towards our final resting-place."

"Fact," murmured the Colonel, approvingly, with the solemnity of a man listening to a religious discourse.

"Messieurs, nous allons boire à la santé de tout le monde. Yes, gentlemen, this is the distillation of that evanescent spirit of love, which drifts so erratically about the world. Thom, you old villain, fill these gentlemen's glasses again."

Again the liquor, with a glow like that which sometimes hangs faint, yet ruddy, upon Italian clouds at sunset, trickled forth into the stunted glasses, and again Monsieur Crapolet resumed his discourse. It was to be the last drink, for the flask was empty ere the twelfth glass was quite full, and his remarks in consequence took a more melancholy cast.

"Monsieur, je suis un ours, un miserable ours ; you will forgive me that I am so dull and unsociable, for I am very unhappy."

In order that the reader may the better understand the full force, beauty, and effect of these last remarks of Monsieur Crapolet, it will be well for him to picture that gentleman, as he then appeared in a posture that would have been recumbent, but for the protecting arms of Thom, with his lower jaw slightly inclined to droop, his eyes now roaming tenderly over the crowd, now cast upwards to Thom's venerable visage, with an expression equalled only in the last agonies of an expiring grimalkin.

"Aye, gentlemen, there is no future for me but what is clouded by the remembrances of the past ; there is no peace but in the grave. Hold on, Thom, you scoundrel. Gentlemen, had I married Virginie—ou bien Mathilde—gently, Thom—I shouldn't have been the miserable outcast that you see before you. If it wasn't for Thom here—aye, good Thom—I should be alone in the world. But Thom—aye, yes, Thom—good Thom—kiss me, Thom ; one more drink à la santé de—Thom."

And with these words lingering upon his tongue, Monsieur Crapolet was got into the boat, and we at length started *en route* for the native side of Chagres.

Disembarking there, we engaged a small boy, a lithe, long-limbed, straight-haired, Indian-looking little fellow, who came well recommended, to accompany us in the character of guide ; after which negotiation, we selected our places upon the camels, and were speedily rocking through the old paved street, and past the wretched bamboo huts upon whose front the religion of the country, expressed in the never-failing motto of "poco tiempo," is written in unmistakable hieroglyphics.

CHAPTER VII.

A TRAMP IN THE WOODS.

LEAVING the filthy and ruinous hamlet in our rear, we crossed the brook which divides it from the dense forests and scrubby hills on the north. We cast a last glance at the sea upon our left hand, "spitting in the face of heaven," where its incomings were stayed by the brown old rocks of San Lorenzo, and turned our heads resolutely towards the wilderness of verdure, whose secret chambers we were about to penetrate unbidden.

Why not? What good reason is there to hesitate? Because the shadows congregate there, are we on that account to imagine hobgoblins and such dire personages as haunting the spot? Or do we fear the known and possible dangers! Nonsense! Man goes "down to the sea in ships," and traverses the barren desert, and why should he shrink from the jungle of the dark forest? What is the earth, the whole of it, but the play-ground or the vineyard which our Father has made for the labors and recreation of his children, and there is no bound set beyond which we may not pass. Even if the worst comes, and we are mortally injured by our daring, are we not taken to our Father's house, where our wounds shall be healed for ever? Come on, then.

On quitting the clean hills in the vicinity of the fort, our road at first lay through a dense portion of balata and other timber, where there was but little undergrowth. Here we made good travelling. The soil was firm, and the passage

amongst the trees of ample width to permit our animals to pass with ease. The tall monarchs of the forest shook their evergreen leaves, amid which the wind and birds made music pleasantly above our heads, distilling thence a refreshing coolness ; while beneath our feet the broad flakes of sunlight which lay scattered in irregular little clusters, made the earth to resemble a rich carpet quaintly chequered with green and gold. It was quite inspiring to journey through a country where nature wore so genial and vigorous a front. It is true that we were sometimes reminded of the inevitable lot of all things earthly, by coming suddenly upon the trunk of an old tree, which had fallen from extreme age, perhaps, years before, and which the great ants of the Tropics were carrying off piecemeal, staggering along in Indian file under their load of rotten timber. And sometimes, too, but not often, a decayed and broken branch hung down directly across our pathway, forcing the camels very unwillingly from their straightforward path. If there is an animal to be admired for his undeviating perseverance in what he is pleased to consider his road of duty, it is certainly the camel. Taking it for granted that he is right, he follows up the balance of David Crockett's motto, and goes ahead with an unflinching exactitude. There is something majestic in the way in which he ignores obstacles ; which, be it noted nevertheless, are at times more disastrous to his rider than to his own yielding, but thick-laid hide.

Now it happened that after entering this wooded tract, some of us had dismounted, and were making our way on foot, and it further happened that Judge Smithers and I found ourselves promenading together alongside of the camel which bore the Major and his wife. Behind him rode the disconsolate Monsieur Crapolet, with his faithful boy Thom, marching squire-like at his side. The Major being very tall and straight,

had had one or two narrow escapes of his hair from the low-hanging branches beneath which we were travelling. At length he dropped off and joined our pedestrian party.

"I began to feel," said he, "as if my father's prediction was about to be realized, and that I should indeed live to be hung—but it would have been like Absalom—by the hair."

As the Major spoke, the melody of Monsieur Crapolet's horn, on which instrument of tin that unhappy but tuneful "ours" had been performing some extra shakes for our edification, suddenly ceased, and a fiercely uttered "*sacré!*" in its stead, drew our attention towards the performer. He was in rather a laughable predicament. It appeared that in the satisfaction which he had experienced in the execution of a remarkably successful shake, he had been led immediately afterwards into a triumphant flourish of the instrument itself, and that, reaching his arm at too great a length about his head, it had become entangled in the branches of a tree. Now the camel on which he rode, finding that his rider was in trouble, knelt, according to custom in such cases, leaving our quondam musician hanging—not like Absalom, for, alas, Monsieur Crapolet, as already described, was bald—but in precisely the style in which you often see a sloth clinging, by the day together, with one of his fore legs twisted round an over-hanging limb; and with somewhat of the distinguished grace with which the sloth falls, when the same limb is severely shaken, did our fellow-voyager tumble to the ground. One would have thought, from his plump figure, that he would have rebounded at the touch like a ball of India-rubber; but if the truth must be confessed, Monsieur Crapolet's corporeal frame was at that moment so thoroughly saturated with Maraschino, "*petit lait*," and "*le Parfait Amour*," that he fell flat and heavy as a moist sponge.

"Liquor is down," observed Colonel Allen, with what I

believe is termed a horse-laugh, "now then, stranger, give us some of the low notes."

"It's the old destiny," said the Major, "a man can't be generous and rise to any height of gaiety without suffering afterwards a corresponding relapse. Eve's generosity was the cause of Adam's fall."

"The Major is certainly very clear-headed, and apropos with his biblical ideas," remarked Tom.

"He goes right to the core of things," said the Colonel, with a pleasant smile.

"My opinion is," said the Judge, "that something stronger than cider is at the bottom of this. I don't recollect to have ever met a walking demijohn capable of holding a greater quantity of the stuff."

The unfortunate subject of these remarks was now upon his legs again, thanks to the kind attentions of Thom, and able to answer for himself.

"Gentlemen," said he, as he scrambled back upon his camel, "such is life; to-day we are in the empyrean of prosperity, to-morrow —"

"Floored," suggested Colonel Allen.

"Exactement; as the English Lord Boir-le-grog used to say when in Paris."

"Not Bolingbroke?" queried the Judge.

"Bolingbroke or Boir-le-grog, ça m'est egal—as this famous English lord used to say."

"Excuse my laughing," interrupted Tom, "but really I could not help it, such a droll figure as you cut, sir, hanging to that tree, a martyr to the love of music."

"A man with a horn too much," said the Colonel.

"And then afterwards," continued Tom, "as you lay sprawling upon the ground; oh, it was excellent. If Virginie could have seen you in that position, how she would have pitied you, poor girl."

"Young man," returned the discarded lover, with a mock serious, sentimental air, "you never said a truer thing. It is when in adverse circumstances, that woman loves man best. The great trouble with me has always been that I have been too fortunate in life. Now when I returned to France from Guiana, I had none of the fascinating, bilious hue of the Tropics. Parbleu, I was as fresh and rosy as if I had been leading a gay life among the salons and cafés of Paris. If I had come back, for instance, subject to the fever and ague, and required constant nursing, or showed in my debilitated frame the weakening effects of the Torrid zone, I think I can safely predict who would have been the husband of Virginie, or at all events Mathilde."

"But you said that they were both married at the time."

"True," said Monsieur Crapolet, "I forgot that."

We were nearly out of the timber, as it appeared, and a few paces further on we came into a more open space, through which a stream from the mountains was flowing. We had been gradually rising, as we got over the ground, and now found ourselves upon the brow of a hill, which fell off precipitously before us. It was evident that we had missed the ordinarily travelled path, for we saw at a distance of more than half a mile below us on the river, a number of native women and children, engaged in washing and spreading clothes. I am uncertain which would have made the pleasantest and most striking picture—those dark-skinned half-naked native women, scattered along the banks or squatting upon the rocks, in the very centre of the swift running stream, with the sun-light falling aslant just over their heads, and flooding the opposite hill-side with a golden radiance, leaving their not ungraceful figures clearly defined in the rich deep shade; engaged in an occupation, homely if you will, but made dignified and charming in such a visible

presence of scenic grandeur—or ourselves pausing for a moment on the abrupt brow of the tall acclivity, with the great old trees waving above our heads; our foreign animals and appliances about us, an oriental grouping displayed amid the wild luxuriance of western nature.

“The question now arises,” remarked Judge Smithers, taking a bird’s-eye view of our isolated position, “as to what we are to do next; so far, our young scapegrace of a guide seems to have had it all his own way.”

“There appears to be a down-hill course before us,” said the Colonel, “and the subscriber takes occasion to say that he has never found any difficulty in that.”

Our little imp of a guide was not at all disposed to own up to any deficiency on his part, but kept pointing earnestly to the other side of the ravine, and calling out, “Bueno camino, bueno camino!” This little wretch was certainly the beau-ideal of a young vagabond, as he capered so grotesquely yet airily in our van, cutting wantonly with his long cane-knife at everything within reach, and bursting out every two or three minutes into some wild or plaintive snatch of song. His costume, if not quite complete, was yet partially good in particulars wherein Thom’s was entirely deficient. It consisted of a bruised and broken hat of plaited straw, and a blue and white striped calico shirt, leaving his lower limbs at full liberty to perform any gymnastic flourishes which might occur to him.

“Bueno camino, on the other side of the river, is it?” said Colonel Allen, “but how in the dragon’s name are we to get there, eh?”

The boy began capering along downward towards where we saw the native women at work, and beckoned us to follow. We were not long in coming to a kind of natural staircase, down which our sure-footed beasts carried us with ease,

and arriving safely on the firm level bank of the stream, we decided upon a halt for lunch. It was a charming spot, cool, shady, with a clean sandy floor, and delicious water bubbling and flowing alongside. A delightful spot to be in, and easy of access on the one hand, but how were we ever to penetrate the bristling wilderness which frowned down upon us from the other?

Lunch over, it was proposed by Judge Smithers that two or three of us, accompanied by our experienced guide, should set out on a reconnoitring expedition in search of a continuation of the road. For all the signs we then saw, it looked far more encouraging for Mr. Vale's "Anaconda line across the Isthmus," than for our less fleet and more cumbersome offspring of the desert. So solemn and determined was the close arrayed front of forest verdure we were to break in upon, that we experienced a presentiment even before setting out, to the effect that we should have our labor for our pains; and accordingly set our Moors to work in unpacking the camels and pitching the tents preparatory to the night's bivouac.

The reconnoitring party consisted of Judge Smithers, Colonel Allen, and myself, for our model guide frisked about on his own hook, and I have no question that if the truth were known, we should find that the little villain had been all along diverting himself extremely with our bewilderment. He would plunge at times into the bushes on our right as we travelled down the river's bank, and writhe himself out again a short distance in advance of us, with a delighted glitter in his devilish, bright eyes, exclaiming, "Camino no es bueno," and again skipping on ahead. At length he seemed to have actually made a discovery, for he waited our approach with a satisfied air, pointing his skinny arm towards the forest, and shouting, "bueno camino." And

sure enough, there was a bit of a clearing where he stood, a kind of Spanish mule path—upon which we judged it as well upon the whole to enter. It led through rank growing thickets, up steep piles, as it were, of slippery clay, and down suddenly into ugly-looking if not dangerous gullies. Notwithstanding the profusion of undergrowth, there was no scarcity of the larger trees, with branches and foliage so intersected as to shut out the sunshine as with an impenetrable veil. It seemed from the little puddles which we met at every few paces, that the clayey soil was of such toughness as to hold water for a great length of time, for no rain had fallen since we set out. However, we kept on, staggering, sliding, climbing over the ground, beneath this lowering canopy of green, more from a repugnance which we felt to turning back, than from any faint hope of the road improving sufficiently to warrant our entering upon it with the camels. Our *soi-disant* guide had disappeared.

There was some little amusement, of rather a doubtful kind nevertheless, to be derived from a contemplation of our several bespattered persons and rueful faces. As we picked our way along, stepping into the holes in the path to insure a footing, the muddy water would sometimes spirt upwards to our full height, plentifully baptizing us after the manner of this world. For once in his life, Colonel Allen, of Missouri, so far as his personal appearance went at all events, was pretty much on a par with his associates. But even then, relentless fate was preparing a more thorough baptism, which should restore him to his quondam unenviable position.

The Colonel was the leader of our party, and had now succeeded in scrambling, somewhat crab-like, to the very summit of a particularly slippery eminence. Without stopping to take breath, he commenced the descent, and disap-

peared from our sight as suddenly as if the earth had swallowed him. The next instant we heard a shout, far, far below us, on the other side, and the idea immediately occurred to us that the Colonel had lost his footing, and gone to the bottom by the run. And so it was; for on our reaching the top, and looking down, there he was, sure enough, buried in a swamp, with his head out, puffing and blowing like a struck porpoise. His hat, which had never been one of Genin's best, floated in the slime near him, and he himself, facetious man, was beating the mud with his freed arms, and jerking his body upward, by the action of his legs, for all the world like a boy "treading water." I clung to a bush at my side, that I might laugh with the greater safety.

"This is the end of your down-hill career," observed the Judge, parentally. "Stuck in the mud at last."

"Confound your moralizing," roared Allen, with his mouth full of mud and water, "and bear a hand to help the subscriber out of this infernal swamp."

"Bueno camino," sung out a little squeaking voice from a jungle near by, and our nice young guide presented himself, with an extra suppleness in his entire frame.

"You half-grown cub of a she-dragon!" roared the Colonel again,— "once put the subscriber clear of this, and he'll fix your flint for you."

Whether the boy fully understood the drift of the Colonel's threat, or not, I cannot say, but retiring within the shadow of the jungle, he presently reappeared with a stout limb of balata, which he threw across the swamp, or *quick-mud*, suffering its extremity to rest upon the borders thereof, and again retreated, throwing his head back waggishly, and kicking up his bare heels like a young colt. It is, perhaps, needless for me to add that we never saw him again.

Now the old proverb, that it is much easier to get into a scrape than to get out of one, found no exception in this particular case; and it was only by dint of such gymnastic evolutions as would be set down for caricaturing, should I endeavor to depict them, that the Colonel at last got himself astride of the log, and began edging his way to *terra firma*. Oh, what a laughable plight he was in, to be sure. There he stood, hatless and bootless; his face, hair, and habiliments all of a color, like a miller or coal-heaver, but of a shade which I should describe as a sort of cross between the two.

"Boots gone?" inquired Judge Smithers, with a sympathizing air.

"Boots!" retorted the Colonel, holding out one leg like a darkey fiddler, and steadily regarding the foot thereof; "yes, and stockings too; see here, Judge, just suppose the subscriber to be in the eel business, and to have come across a particularly hard set that wouldn't be skinned nohow, why he'd just take 'em along to one of these Spanish pantanas, and if that wouldn't do their business, set the aforesaid down for a raw sucker!"

"Nonsense, Allen, you know that you were never the proprietor of a pair of stockings. Don't let yourself down to the meanness of endeavoring to attract sympathy for the loss of property which you never possessed."

"It's the way of the world, Judge, as you well know. Old Caleb Balderstone used to say, that a fire accounted for all deficiencies, actual and impossible; and it's rather hard if such a vile, blasted mud-bath as the subscriber has just taken, shouldn't explain some. But never mind that, let's see how you are to get the aforesaid back to camp, since it's pretty certain that you two will have to take turns in carrying him; as to his walking, that is out of the question."

Here was the boot on the other leg with a vengeance ! There were portions of the road back, which lay over flinty ground, where it would not be easy for a person unaccustomed to the exercise to walk barefoot. On contemplating the prospect, with this new light before us, I must confess that I did not feel quite so strongly inclined to laugh. But the ever-fertile brain of Judge Smithers was equal to the emergency.

“Just fetch that stick along with you, Allen, and when we get to the bad places, you will take the position thereupon termed, in military parlance, ‘as you were,’ and we’ll carry you into camp, the latest living personification of riding on a rail !”

There was nothing for it, under the circumstances, but to retrace our steps. The sun was almost down, and deeper and darker shadows crouched in every thicket. As we travelled backward, we were several times in danger of missing our way, though, thanks to the elastic surface of the clayey ground, we had more falls than bruises. When we finally got clear of the wood altogether, and entered the open valley, where was our camp and friends, it seemed like getting home again. We could not help feeling the calm, quiet, cloudless repose in which the spot seemed to lie, as if it were a reflection of the clear bright sky, imparting to our harassed bosoms a portion of its own serenity. The large, round moon was squandering upon every thing within view, its treasures of silver light, giving to the dark woods, the climbing hills, and the sparkling river, a rich, mellow, yet half unreal loveliness. In a little dot, as it were, of this magnificent picture of still life, were seen the white tents and moving figures of our camp, with a curling wreath of smoke ascending from the rear of a broad, black curtain.

A few moments more, and we were in the midst of this picturesque group. Oh, such side-splitting shouts of welcome and laughter, when we unceremoniously spilt the mud-coated Colonel from his novel hand-barrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER DINNER.

DID the reader infer, from what has been said, that Monsieur Crapolet was at all overcome by liquor, or transported out of his ordinary state on this occasion? If so, the writer must plead guilty to having led him into error, for I now distinctly recollect, that on our return to camp the chief of the culinary department was fulfilling his duties with the most scrupulous and clear-headed exactitude.

And in due time appeared Thom, his shiny black shoulders, chest, and arms, streaked with lines of rolling perspiration, bearing various steaming and truly savory dishes for dinner. This Thom of ours had a way of rolling up the whites of his eyes, that was quite startling, and seen in the moonlight, curiously impressive. If it be true, as suggested by a recent philosophic writer, that a negro is "kind of cross between a monkey and a man," I shouldn't wonder if this Thom did feel at times some rather quaint twinges, at his peculiar way of introducing the two races. But he was a taciturn old fellow, who loved his solitary pipe better than anything else, and whenever I mentioned my suspicions to him, he would cut me short by a most emphatic "Ah-wah!" uttered in a querulous, half angry tone, as much as to say "now don't bother me—get out!"

Dinner was over, and such a dinner!—A few days afterwards, when we were going up Chagres river, and I saw a

great, awful, lazy, mud-brown alligator, lying out so patriarchally under the immensity of over-hanging foliage, the uncouth impersonation, as it were, of the pestiferous vapors and noisome atmospheric ingredients of that fatal river, it seemed to me, rather a quaint fancy to be sure, but he did actually bring to mind, so stately and lonely as he was, the image of old David sitting between the gates, and inquiring for his progeny. "Have you met my young alligators?" he seemed to say, and certain compunctious gnawings of the intestines made answer, "We have seen and eat them."

But at any rate dinner was over, and "what was *eat* was *eat*, would it were worthier." We were lying about in groups, smoking of course—everybody smokes on the Isthmus. It was a bright, balmy, mellow evening, such as is only seen within the Tropics. There was a peculiar softness in the air that was delightfully grateful to our weary frames, bathing us, as it were, in a delicious vapor. It was one of those evenings when the gay greenery of earth, entwined and festooned in every possible shape of fantastic beauty though it be, is forgotten in the sublime appreciation of siderial beauty; when every flitting of the summer wind awakens harmonious responses in the topmost boughs of the tall trees; when the round moon is a well remembered friend, speaking to us silently of early innocent pulsations; when the very birds, penetrated by the still loveliness of the hour, "murmur in their dreams of the dim sweetness fitfully;" when earth is remembered only as a land of calm and holy joys, and heaven itself seems not so very far away; when the drifting fleecy clouds seem but the white-robed spirits of our young departed comrades, beckoning us thitherward; when we feel ourselves so transfigured by the genius of the hour that we only wonder why our wings are wanting and we cannot follow them.

I remember having left our party for a moment's solitary stroll. Such times never fail to call up memories of all the old times that had any features in common, and now I was reviewing specially some of our nights upon the desert, where the same soft sky and the same pale moon was over us, but how different the surroundings; there nature was clad in such severe, almost bald simplicity; there she wore such eternal calmness on her oriental front, as if there were no deeds within her placid bosom to hide from the pure gaze of those fair stars above; and here were such turbulent and luxurious forms of beauty. How the whole earth throbbed and heaved with the fresh vigor of its vegetable life, and crowded out its progeny of green things into the upper air, like a great army. Its tangled and almost impenetrable front, yet wrought into shapes of strange beauty in all its thousand lines, the home and dwelling-place of serpents, wild beasts, and gay-plumaged birds, was typical in its massive headlong growth of that people who were bearing empire on their rough shoulders away from the sluggish patriarchal East.

Musing somewhat in this wise, I had come suddenly upon a little open space where the moonlight was falling in between the branches in spray-like gushes. I threw myself upon the ground, and was startled at hearing a voice close behind me—it was Arthur Orrington, at prayer.

He was praying that he might feel the proper solemnity of the act, and bring himself into a mood when he would feel it no blasphemy to ask communion with the Lord; and he went on to pray that in the bitterness of self-denial, he might find strength to gain the mastery over a great sin that was growing upon him, that he might realize that a good and great deed was an object of real and eternal beauty, God's thought in action; and even more

worthy to be loved and coveted than his thought manifest in forms of beauty, and that he might, in time, become impregnated with a portion of that goodness even, which is God, and so begin to grow for ever into his likeness. Then as I was stealing off, for the wonderful solemnity of his thoughts and language overpowered me, I heard him thanking God for those words of Christ, when he said that the highest evidence of attachment a man could show to a friend, was to lay down his life for him.

Prayer! it is a sacred and hallowed thing. It is the highest, most blessed privilege vouchsafed to mortal man. It is the one thing which more than all other things proves him to be indeed but little lower than the angels, the one God-recognised link connecting the mortal with the immortal. So long as man can find the heart to pray he is not lost. But prayer is too holy a thing to be made light or common of. It seems to me that not often in man's life should he dare to exercise that awful prerogative in its fullest sense; not but that his life should be one constant prayer of praise and gratitude, but shown in his life, and not in words. Yet in times of great peril how soothing, how ennobling to be able to look up and say, "God help us!" and after a miraculous escape, what emotion so exquisite as that which accompanies the heart-uttered, "thank God!" as it goes on wings of gratitude straight to the eternal throne. These are the prayers which work out a man's salvation.

Earnestness and sincerity always command respect, whatever may be the circumstances under which we behold their development. No matter how absurd or visionary may be a man's aim in our estimation, yet if we see him firm, straightforward, and persevering, and feel, besides, that he is really in earnest, we involuntarily fall back to let him pass, and look after him with a certain sentiment of admiration, which

we are hardly willing to acknowledge to ourselves. And if so be his course conflicts not with our own, but leads above it, and in its brilliancy reflects a certain light upon ours, then we breathe blessings upon the path which blinds and dazzles us. I have done no justice to the prayer of Arthur Orrington in the woods. The language in which his thoughts were clothed was as pure and grand as they. Surrounded as I had been for so long by those whose struggle was for the forms of life, this expression of a soul which asked for something more, even for the true essence of existence, overcame me with a profound solemnity. The great reality of this man's purpose made me feel as if the rest of us were chasing shadows. I think I must have carried my impressions pretty plainly on my countenance, for when I returned to camp, Colonel Allen, who was the first to observe me, called out defiantly that "the subscriber was ready to bet the drinks for the crowd, that the new-comer had met a ghost."

"Speaking of ghosts," said Tom, "what a ghostly place the old fort at Chagres is?"

"Aint it?" said the Colonel abstractedly.

"But have you really seen a ghost?" inquired Mrs. Wallack, who took great interest in things supernatural.

"No," said I.

"Then," observed Judge Smithers, "Allen has lost the drinks."

"Agreed," said Allen. "And speaking of the old fort and drinks in connexion, the subscriber takes occasion to state to the crowd that he is the proprietor of a most extraordinarily cobweby bottle, found by the aforesaid while on a voyage of discovery in said fort, which cobweby bottle is supposed to contain some excellent old Cognac, something probably prior to the time of Otard."

"I suggest that the subscriber produces the same without further prelude," said Tom.

"Now then, Allen," observed the Judge, "here is a chance to clear up your character somewhat. If this little story of the bottle *should* turn out to be true, it will be a perfect God-send to you, and like charity, cover a multitude of lies. Produce the Cognac."

"But that State House story—" began Allen.

"We will have another time," continued the Judge; "and now for the brandy."

Upon this, "the subscriber" began to stir his stumps, and proceeded towards Thom's apartment, as if there was really a bottle of brandy to be brought forth. It seemed at any rate that he had got to the right shop, in one sense, for throwing up his hands in consternation, as he looked behind the black curtain, he uttered these memorable words—

"The subscriber takes occasion to be astonished."

Then plunging desperately from our sight, he presently reappeared, bearing in his clutches the unfortunate Monsieur Crapolet, who was presented to us as a culprit taken in the act of drawing the cork from Allen's cobweby bottle. Poor Crapolet! he had the corkscrew inserted just ready for a pull, and I really believe the lachrymose lover was very thirsty, for he eyed the bottle longingly, while Colonel Allen harangued him as follows:—

"Miserable Frenchman, you are truly worthy to be ranked with the man spoken of in Scripture."

"Where?" inquired Judge Smithers.

"In Scripture," said Allen triumphantly, "spoken of in Scripture, of whom Solomon in his wisdom said, 'thou art the man.'"

"Let me see" said the Judge, "what was the beginning of that story?"

"The subscriber will be proud to enlighten you on the subject. A rich man once gave a great dinner."

"Ah, yes, who was it?"

"I don't exactly recollect that part of it," said Allen, "but I think it was Solomon—if not—Saul."

"But they were not contemporaries."

"We won't argue that point," said the Colonel.

"Well, go on," said the Judge.

"This man then—"

"Who?"

"Saul—this man Saul, had plenty of everything for dinner: Mulligatawny soup, boiled cod-fish, oyster sauce—roast beef, goose, turkey, venison, wild ducks, lobster salad, chicken fixens, in fact a good dinner."

"What book do you find that recorded in, Allen?"

"What book? Scripture. Well, he had everything, this old King Solomon, everything but mutton. He would not have noticed this, if it had not ha' been for an old chap, a particular friend of his, named Jeroboam, who observed on taking a glass of port with the King, that *such* port wouldn't be a bad accompaniment for boiled mutton and caper sauce."

"My impression is," said Tom, "that it was roast mutton that was called for."

"We won't argue *that* point," said the Colonel, "so he calls one of his men—John, says he,"—

"Never mind the rest of the story," said Judge Smithers, "there is such a passage in the Bible as, 'Thou art the man,' and from your knowing that, I thought it possible that you might have read something in the book when young."

"Parbleu, he got my measure that time, sur la gauche," said Monsieur Crapolet, shrugging his shoulders, "for certainly, I furnished an excellent dish of mutton three times a week."

"Revenons à nos moutons," said Tom, "to the bottle."

"To the bottle," repeated Allen, applying himself to withdrawing the cork. In this department of industry, the dilapidated colonel was unrivalled, extracting the cork, and holding a glass in his left hand, and the bottle in his right, he proceeded, as he thought, to turn out the liquor.

"But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower—its bloom is shed."

And so although "the subscriber" held the bottle quite correctly in a horizontal position, nothing issued therefrom.

"Come come, Allen," said Judge Smithers jocosely, "you've gone through the motions very well, and we'll let you off with that."

"But the subscriber protests—" began Allen, quite fiercely.

"It was only some kind of light wine, very likely," said Tom soothingly.

"But there is yet something in the bottle," observed the Major, taking it out of the hands of Allen, who remained quite aghast at the very unpleasant termination of the affair.

"And it is a roll of manuscript," continued the Major, who had now broken the bottle, and produced from among the fragments a sealed package, which certainly bore external evidence of being manuscript.

"Ah!" said Allen, coming forward with a brightened air, "who knows but this is the identical bottle which Columbus threw overboard the night he discovered America?"

"Which was washed up into the old fort by some unusual freak of the waves," suggested Judge Smithers; "but there are records which allude to the article thrown overboard by Columbus on a certain occasion as a keg, and not a bottle."

"We wont argue *that* point," said Allen, "but will have the paper read, and the subscriber would suggest that Mr. Eddington read the document aloud."

"If you mean me," said Tom, "and it is the general desire—I shall be most happy to officiate."

"What is the title of it, Tom?" inquired somebody.

"It don't appear to have any," said Tom, "but begins quite abruptly."

"I hope it's funny," said somebody.

"The subscriber stands ready to bet the drinks it aint," said Colonel Allen.

"Of course it isn't," said Judge Smithers, "nobody would think of sealing anything funny up tight, and putting it into a bottle."

"Well then," said Allen doggedly, "the subscriber will bet the drinks it is."

"But you hav'n't paid your last bet, Colonel," said Judge Smithers.

"We wont argue *that* point," said Colonel Allen; "read on, Tom."

Whereupon Tom proceeded to read what the reader of this narrative will find in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BOTTLE MANUSCRIPT.

GOLD, what a strange thing it is! I do verily believe that it is the concentrated, solid essence of the world's lost sunshine.

What power does it not possess?

Power—it needed not a voice from the depths of another world to tell us “to be weak is to be miserable.” This is one of the eternal laws of being, and it is only the fool who wilfully sets it at defiance.

To be powerful, on the other hand, is to be happy; and gold is power. Knowledge is not—virtue is not—gold is!

And now gold is mine!

Yes, mine; and lies here within reach of my arm, as silent and clod-like, in these hundred mouldering and black old kegs, as if it were the merest bits of yellow metal, instead of a fresh and rosy god, with an arm whose beck should bring greatness and glory, like willing slaves, to its side; and a voice seductive as a siren's, winning within its charmed circle, all intoxicating essences of life, love, beauty, flattery.

Mine, with a certain condition, it is true,—a condition made by the lean, sallow, mildewed old keeper, who shoved me into this glorious fortune—that I am to remain here without communication with the world for twelve months; and then to go forth master and owner of it all—not all the

world literally—but yet in fact, since being owner of this gold will make me master and owner of all the best of it.

A hard condition truly ! The shrivelled hermit is little of a man to have supposed it possible, that there could have been any hesitation on my part, in complying with his proposal. As if I hadn't had good reason to know its terrible—its ineffable worth.

As if I hadn't for so many years been plodding along the world's miry paths, looking downwards mostly, that I might not see and envy the gorgeous robes, the buoyant bearing, the proud, self-sustained, triumphant looks ; and with my ears shut, that I might not hear the rattling din of the gallant, merrily bedecked equipages of those favored mortals, who had what I had not—gold.

As if the want of it had not made me come to doubt even my right to a place in a world where it was the one good and needful thing.

As if I had not been a very leper, as it were, in the social world, and seen my old friends and associates shrink back at my approach, drawing their garments closer about them, and whispering to one another, “unclean, unclean !” and all for the want of it.

As if I, myself, hadn't at times slunk away, and getting to a secret place, alone with my Maker, sat coolly down to ask him why it was that he had made me, and placed me in a world where gold was everything, and without which there was nothing—and yet given me none of it.

As if truth and bravery, and love and honor, had not become to me as mere stiff, cold corpses, except as the smiles of this sunny god shed life and beauty over them.

As if—pshaw !

I remember once being in the principal street of a great

city. It seemed to me like a holiday ; everybody was moving rapidly along, talking, laughing, and to the first glance of a superficial eye, appeared gay and happy. Men, women, and children were freshly and tastefully habited, and between these living lines of pleasant faces and graceful forms, horses and vehicles, proudly caparisoned, or glistening like polished mirrors of many brilliant hues, were rattling to and fro, exciting by their gallant action a livelier heat in the general pulsation. The shop windows, with their large clear panes, were rich and attractive in all elegant and costly fabrics. In the brilliancy of the *tout ensemble* of the scene, I quite forgot that the real proprietors of its glitter and magnificence were but a few, and that the many saw it but with blight and bitterness of heart, hating themselves for the very envy which it excited. I revelled and basked in its serene brightness, and felt glad in being a part of such a world.

But the reaction came when I looked at the separate parts of which the whole was composed.

A man was walking directly before me, leading by the hand a little girl. The man was poorly dressed, seedy, pale, haggard, and the little girl was likewise poorly clad, but with locks of dark wavy hair, in which delicate threads of sunshine seemed to mingle ; a full fresh happy face, the pure good eye of a young angel on God's errand, and a form of light and beauty, "that might have walked unchallenged through the skies."

It was natural that all the rich and beautiful things of earth should be hers—that she should have but to will, and they should fall about her like a fitting vesture, which she would wear with the unconscious grace and dignity of the old divinity of right. It seemed to me as if the highest possible use to which all the best and most beautiful of this

world's possessions could be put, would be to lie down at her feet and ask in winningest tones to be thought beautiful by *her*. Oh, with what a sudden wrench was this delicious idea torn from my mind! For to realize that anything could be wanting to gratify her pure and child-like wishes, was to feel that this world was all miserably wrong, and that the face of mother nature, and the not less divine countenance of her best beloved, Art, were but false and vain.

"Papa," said she, letting her words fall liquidly and clearly, as if they were indeed little globules of sound, floating outward and upward from her soul, and alive with some of its own pure essence, "how swiftly and grandly the carriages go by, the horses seem to have hidden wings. Oh, I would so like to ride."

The father scowled—a scowl of black, fiendish malignity, that cast a horrible shadow over the wide street, and fell with a deep plunge into my soul like a ball of ice. The child did not see it, but went tripping on, in a circle of light that was brighter and better than the sun's, because it reflected outward from her own heart.

Next they paused a moment to look into a shop window, where costly designs in gold and silver were displayed.

"See, papa, that beautiful little silver castle," said the child again, "I should like it for my wooden soldiers;" and receiving no response, she added quickly, as if in divination of the reason, "but I can't have it, you know, because it costs more money than you have got, and so I do not really want it, dear papa."

And then because he made no answer to her childish prattle, but hurried her silently away with him, then I hated him, and cursed him heartily for a mean despicable thing. I had no pity for his broken spirit, his wasted manhood, his lost aims of life, I only saw that he was weak, where

he should have been most strong, and in my stunned misery, I uttered a silent but earnest request that God would give me death, and after that the agonies of hell, rather than that I should ever be the means of denying to youth the enjoyment which is its eternal heritage.

How often since has the vision of that little girl with her great soul-lit eyes come up and mingled with my dreams! What, if through her own poverty and the machinations of the rich she went astray in after years, and so lost that heaven which was her birthright? Yes, and what if there should be no other and better world than this, and no God anywhere but—gold!

“Here is a break in the manuscript,” observed Tom, looking up from the papers, “and when it continues the handwriting is somewhat changed.”

“As if the ink had thickened by exposure in that devilish hole,” suggested the Judge, looking over the reader’s shoulder.

“Never mind; go on, Tom.”

And Tom went on to read.

What a magnificent position is this of mine! I am overlooking the bustle and ridiculous activity of my fellows in their heated search for what I have only to lie back awhile, and then coolly take possession of. It is true that my window has a villanous grate over it, and if it hadn’t, there is little probability that I should be in a hurry to part company with these old kegs, and take a precipitous plunge from an elevation of several hundred feet into the Chagres river, or upon the sharp-pointed rocks along its margin. But it is, nevertheless, very soothing—tickling, I think, is the better expression, to watch from thence the crowd as they land, and afterward go up river, and again to see as great a crowd returning, wayworn, sick, and after all with but the

merest handful of what is piled in great masses by my side.

The only idea that troubles me at all is that I am getting it too easy, and shall consequently not appreciate it as I ought; twelve months, how quick they will roll away in pleasant anticipations!

"Is there much more of it?" asked Colonel Allen, who held a pack of cards in his hands, upon which he was, as it seemed unconsciously, performing some curious mechanical operations with a kind of double-headed scraper, such as changing at a single rasp trays into aces, and villanous jacks into very respectable queens, simply by taking off their caps.

"Not a great deal," said Tom, drawing attention to the Colonel's innocent amusement, by a wink, and reading on.

Last night it was raining heavily; I collected some bits of wood and fragments of hoops, that were scattered about the floor of my cell, or rather room, and built me a nice little fire. It was very cheery. As I sat rubbing my hands over the blaze, I could not refrain from chuckling over my fortunate lot, in looking forward to the time when I would have a hearthside of my own, and the gold which should buy all the appliances to make it so very cosy and comfortable. Long after it had all burned out, and I was sleeping soundly on my blanket stretched upon the kegs, I was awakened by a distant shouting: I got up, and there was a broad glare of light dashing into my chamber. It came from the American side of the river, where a house was on fire, and by its flashing gleams I could see the hurried and anxious forms of men, some of whom were being made beggars by its fitful freaks. It was emblematic of my own gold.

Gold, thought I to myself, it is like the yellow flame, so quiet and helpful a servant, so kind and companionable a

friend, but when roused and bending its energies for evil what a very terrible demon it is !

Well, let it be a demon ; let it work its freaks and its torments, I have seen poverty do worse.

I was once riding in a rail-car on a long route ; amongst other passengers I noticed a young woman enter with an infant in her arms. I did not particularly notice the young woman at first, but I could not help observing the child, and thinking to myself how like a little cherub it was. It was a boy. I knew that at once, from its fearless smile and self-relying air. But bye and bye I also noticed that the mother—it was easy enough to make out that she *was* the mother—looked strangely at her fellow travellers, almost glaring at them with meaningless (to me, at any rate) bright eyes ; and I further observed, for now I began to watch her curiously, that her expression changed most vividly and earnestly as she looked into her little one's face and watched its happy triumphant aspect. It was as if she were turning away from a broad bleak desert, or a wide, wide dreary sea, to a little sunny spot of earth that was her home ; but the love that shot as it were from her eyes had in it a glitter so deep and dazzling, that it impressed me with a strange sensation bordering even upon terror. There was a small private room in the car where we were riding, and with a shrinking glance at the rest of the company she withdrew thither, clinging passionately to her feeble little charge ; I remember that a quaint sort of thought came to me as she retired from our observation ; what if that babe should die ? the tiny hillock over its bones would be to that dreaming mother a mountain which she could never pass, and the great world would never be tenanted by her again.

Well, we rode along, and when we arrived at our journey's end, I had forgotten all about the mother and her

babe, but as I was leaving the car, the door of the private room suddenly opened and the mother came forth, *alone*. I watched her a moment to see her go back for her child, but she kept steadily on towards the steps of the car preparatory to getting out.

"Madam," said I, accosting her, "you have left your babe behind."

"Yes," said she coolly, "he is many miles behind us. See here. My little boy was happy to-day for a moment, and was dead before the fever flush passed off. I did it. I was coming here, you see, to a new place without money or friends; coming to continue my old life of sin and wretchedness—a life of which my boy was as yet utterly unconscious—so when we were passing an open spot in the woods up which some birds were idly fanning themselves along, and he was twittering and beating his little arms in very sympathy, then I seized suddenly on all the misery and desperation of years, and compressing it to a little circle within my hands, tightened it about his tender neck and strangled him thus, and then threw him after the birds into the woods; and there he is sleeping for ever without ever having had to taste one drop of the agony which is my daily drink. Now let them do with me what they will, I have conquered my last weakness—I lost heaven long ago—what right have I to hanker after one of its holiest joys?"

This was another terrible mystery to me in God's providence.

"Here is another break in the manuscript, indicated by several lines of asterisks," said Tom, pausing in his reading.

"From which we are left to infer," observed Judge Smithers, "that the author might have given us some better thoughts yet, if he would but have taken the trouble to pen his inspiration."

"Pray go on," said Colonel Allen.

And Tom went on.

I am half-sick to-day, and quite down-hearted. Last night I was very restless. I awoke about midnight. The moonbeams were shining clear and pale across my chamber. I had an unpleasant fancy come over me, that I was lying upon a heap of human bones, instead of my kegs of gold. Even when I got up and moved off a little to take a fairer view, I could not quite get rid of the idea. These black kegs did look dead, rotten, and kind of devilish too, in the holy moonlight.

Some hours afterward while I was lying on the damp stone floor, I felt something crawl over my breast; I jumped up hastily, and thought I saw the retreating form of a snake writhing through a hole in a corner of the room. I must have been mistaken about this, as to-day I can find no trace of any hole or crack—but the idea was real enough to spoil the balance of my night's rest. I did so long for daylight, that I could have shouted for joy when I saw the first rays of the sun fall aslant upon the red roofs of the Chagres houses. How I fretted to be over there only for a moment, just to have a cup of coffee at "Old Joe's," or a drink with one of the boatmen!

What if gold should not be the highest good after all? There would I be trapped in a mean position truly!

But I happened to know for a certainty that it is. I had a brother once who died suddenly and miserably, as if he had been stung by a serpent, because he could not or would not bow himself down and worship gold as the chief thing.

It happened in this way. He was my elder brother and a merchant. In his early life he had been wonderfully successful in his ventures. Like old Midas he seemed to

have the golden touch, but he did not prize it as Midas did. On the contrary, he was free and profuse in his expenditures. He married young, and at the time of his death had about him a large family of little children. It's the old story of misplaced confidence that killed him. When the truth came home to him, that men sought after and loved for its own sake, what in his eyes was but dross in itself, and only valuable for what it might aid in effecting; that gold was to be considered as an end and not a means; that he had been buying friendship and respect, when he had all along supposed it to be the voluntary tribute of loyal hearts; that he must give up all his wealth and luxuries, and see himself and wife and little ones become beggars, or else turn crafty like the rest; then it was that his great heart sank within him, and he shut himself up in his own house to die. He was not angry with fate; he did not immure himself thus to spite her, but because his overflowing love and sympathy had gone out and spread itself widely about the world, and had all of it come back chilled and dying, because he recognised in himself a monster who had wilfully preferred honor to selfishness, and brotherly kindness to gold; and because he felt that it was too late for him to wean himself from the great folly of his early manhood, and learn anew the ways of men; this was why his great eyes grew dim and downcast, looking inward with a strange misgiving expression, and his broad clear manly brow, which used to be so calm and noble, became knit and clouded, and he could nowhere find strength to bear up against the fatal consequences of his error.

He died—and I shall never, never forget the day of his burial—so storm-drenched, woe-begone, and God-forsaken as the world seemed that day. But if it had been literally the sunniest one that Nature ever wove her smiles for, it

would have been the same or worse, even, to me—for now it was as if the old mother groaned at the departure of a noble son. And yet it was truly a terrible mistake of which he died.

That night I lay awake for a long time, listening to the howling storm, and wondering where my brother then was, he who had nursed me when a sick boy, and instilled into me in later years, a portion of what I then thought his glorious philosophy. At length I slept. It was late the next morning when I awoke, and now I remember as if it were only this morning that I had seen it; how different was the face of nature from the previous day. The weather had grown quite cold; and over the fields, and on the house tops and fences, and on the branches of trees, lay a vesture of the purest white. Oh! how serene and happy I felt for the moment, for I could not dissuade myself from the fancy that the bare and desolate earth had donned that snowy robe to typify the white raiment which my brother was then wearing among the angels in the new world, whither he had gone.

Ha! what if I should die within these slimy walls, by the side of these rotten kegs, there would be no vesture of snow above my grave!

Here Tom ceased to read, and rolled up the manuscript, to the great relief of Colonel Allen.

"An abrupt termination," remarked the Major.

"He had probably got to the end of his paper," said Judge Smithers.

"It is evidently written," continued the Major, "by some outward-bound Californian, ambitious of appearing in the Magazines, under some such bold heading as 'Manuscript found in a bottle, in one of the dungeons of San Lorenzo!'"

"It has some good things in it," said the Judge, "and is

exactly what a man would *not* have written under the circumstances."

"What do you make of it?" inquired I of Colonel Allen, who was mechanically shuffling the pack of cards, to which allusion has already been made.

"Nothing at all," said the Colonel; "it is neither high, low, Jack, nor the game."

"I propose," said Monsieur Crapolet, with a shrug of his shoulders, intended to awaken "the subscriber" to a sense of his duties, "that as we have abstained for a long time, probably with the view to please somebody, we now treat ourselves to a glass of punch all round."

CHAPTER X.

THE PADRE.

ON the following morning, which I then believed to be Sunday, although I kept no "notched stick," we struck our tents and took up our line of march back to Chagres. We had come to the conclusion to try the river route as far as Gorgona. So following along the banks of the philanthropic stream, which is the one redeeming feature in old Chagres, we at length found ourselves in the outskirts of the town, without observing any visible signs of its having changed much during our absence. Neither do I now recollect that there was any particular evidence of its being the Sabbath. Stay—there was one old crone exciting a brace of formidable-looking cocks to a little frisky skirmish by way of a whet, and on my venturing an observation on the subject to Colonel Allen, she favored us with an explanatory remark—"Hoy, no es domingo, señor!" which certainly there was no denying.

We pitched our camp, this time, a little in the rear of Main street, not far from Senor Ramos' house. I mention Senor Ramos' house in this place as a point of departure, because a good many years ago—several years, in fact, before the discovery of the California gold mines—when I was at Cambridge, and in that staid locality found great relief in dipping into records of travel and adventure, it chanced that I lit upon a very entertaining description of a journey from

Chili to Jamaica, via the Isthmus of Panama, published in one of the British Magazines.

The writer had been particularly cautioned, while at Cruces, about exposing himself to the night air in Chagres, by a Spanish gentleman residing at the former place, of whom, by the by, he relates the following characteristic anecdote. That having, as a consequence of a letter of recommendation from the British Consul at Panama, charged him rather moderately for his night's lodging, he indemnified his finances for this effort of honesty, on the following morning, by giving him in exchange for his doubloons, some spurious coin, which the writer was only able to dispose of afterwards in the way of gratuities to necessitous persons. This very respectable, business-like gentleman condescended to inform him in quite a confidential manner, that there was *one* house at Chagres where he would be comparatively safe, but that he must on no account put his head out of doors during the night, or immediate death would be the result. This wonderful mansion, which could thus hold out against the King of Terrors, was the house of Senor Ramos, and was air-tight. Accordingly the writer goes on to say—I have got the gist of his narrative, although my memory does not retain all his happy expressions—that all that day as they floated down the beautiful, but alas, often fatal river of Chagres, the image of Senor Ramos' air-tight house was ever before him. This Senor Ramos—what a man he must be, too, to have the only air-tight house in a place where a residence in any other kind of house was sure to terminate fatally in a short time. To reach *his* house before night-fall was salvation; to fail thereof, was to become food for alligators.

Well, the writer goes on to describe most graphically how they did finally arrive at Chagres, but long after the sun had set, although he had been spared all the horrors of anticipa-

tion by having fallen asleep just before the disappearance of that every-day luminary. He was aroused from his slumbers by hearing a splash or two in the water alongside, and becoming fairly awake, found to his unutterable consternation, that his dug-out was fast on a mud bank, and that his natives had absconded—"a way they have"—leaving him to take care of himself and luggage. It was probably quite late, for there were no lights to be seen on shore. What was to be done? The man of the air-tight house, how was he to be come at? Would he venture to open his door at such a time, for surely a gush of air would pour in, killing his innocent wife and darling babes! But then for the writer to breathe nothing but this air all night—impossible.

So he goes on to say, that at that solemn hour, "when all around was still," he set himself to work in bellowing most emphatically the name of Senor Ramos, thinking that as he was a man of consequence, this call must surely be attended to by somebody. By and by a man came down and inquired "Por el amor Dios, que hay?" This man was immediately bought up to go and kick vigorously at Senor Ramos' door and inform him—Ramos—of the writer's situation. But, alas, he speedily returned with the melancholy tidings that Senor Ramos was not in town (where *could* he have been, by the by?), and that the family would not open the door at that time of night for mortal man. So our hero betook himself to an Englishman's invariable preventative for malarial diseases, the drinking of brandy and water and smoking cigars; in which medicinal occupation he continued till the arms of Morpheus again received him, and he awoke not till the sun was fairly risen, when he informs us that he knelt down and thanked God that in his merciful Providence he was still alive.

This narrative made a curious impression on me at the

time. I conceived a morbid desire to visit such a deadly place as this old town of Chagres, and wondered if I would die there, should I ever do so. Senor Ramos' house became an object of interest to me, and a place to be seen, as the Coliseum, St. Paul's, or the Louvre. And that is why I now say that our camp was pitched not far from *there*.

But ask the untravelled reader, was Senor Ramos' house such a grand edifice, and was it air-tight? Certainly not; but at the time I did not know how writers, generally considered of the strictest veracity, will sometimes sift a little spice of fiction into their works, where there is a chance of producing an impression. Yet the Ramos mansion, even in my time, was the best house in Chagres. It was a frame building of one story and a half, with a piazza in front, a regular pitch pine floor, and a tight thatched roof projecting down over the piazza, making that quite a cool and inviting spot for a lounge in the day-time. And it might have been comparatively air-tight; and certainly, with its raised wooden floor, must have been a healthier place to sleep in than the wretched huts around.

One day, the Major came to me with quite a chuckling air, and showed me a small bag of specie which he had received of Senor Ramos, in exchange for some doubloons, which, notwithstanding all our unlucky adventures, he had still left among his stores.

"Seventeen dollars to the doubloon," said he, with the air of a successful financial operator.

"Let me see the dollars," said I.

"The real metal," said the Major, taking one out, and ringing it on the table.

"Oh, certainly," said I, "the real metal, only these happen to be New Granadian dollars, which are only worth some seventy or eighty cents each in the States, and your Spanish dou-

bloons are worth according to our last prices current, sixteen American dollars and forty cents."

The Major was extremely crest-fallen, particularly as I laughed quite heartily, which I did from thinking of Senor Ramos' "indemnifying his finances," like his Cruces contemporary, for the impertinent curiosity with which himself and his establishment were often visited.

Apart from Senor Ramos' air-tight house, Chagres proper is truly a wretched old town, and yet I think the American side the most execrable of the two. But the native side has existed for years in its present filthy, dilapidated condition. It is the *home*—Heaven forgive us for thus desecrating that holiest of words—of its inhabitants. Here were they born, and here they grow up; here, in fulness of time, they are supposed to have married, and become fathers and mothers; and when we look upon the place in this light, its mean kennel-like hovels, its putrid streets, its stagnant pools, its slimy pavements, its hairless dogs, its sick carrion-fed pigs, its sneaking lizards, characteristic crabs, its scorpions, centipedes, and tarantulas, all of the latter accepted as belonging to the category of domestic animals—I must confess that I find it hard to recognise these *natives* as members of the same great family as myself. That this place should be so low and vile and loathsome, when it is set in a frame of such magnificent verdure; that these people should eat *pork* and drink the most inflammatory of fire water, when the orange, the mango, and the banana are ripe and mellow, and rotting even on the trees, within a few rods of their thresholds! It is certainly no impious presumption on my part, to hope their heaven, whatever it is to be, may not be mine. And yet, there is no toad, however "ugly and venomous, but wears some precious jewel in its head." So these fellows have served, and are yet serving, a good

purpose in their way; and the dogged perseverance with which they have given the sons of Empire a shove on their careering path, is quite a redeeming trait in their bestial character.

The town, be it remarked, in passing, is not entirely destitute of civic character, as at first sight would appear to be the case. From a bird's-eye view of the huts, one would be a little puzzled to fix upon the precise locality of the Court House, City Hall, or Church, yet Chagres lays claim to a Judge, an Alcalde, and a Priest. And speaking of the priest, one day while we were at Chagres, a little adventure occurred, of which he was the hero. The incident is not very funny, but to those who have met the man, and view it in connexion with his ghostly functions, I have reason to hope that it may prove slightly laughable.

I will premise the narrative, by describing this dignitary as being personally of a sad and sallow cast.

•
“Long, and lean, and lank,
As is the ribbed sea sand!”

With eyes, of which the whites were emphatically “sicklied o’er,” straight black hair like an Indian’s, a solemn, woe-begone expression in general, everlastingly habited in black, but of a texture nowise akin to that which derives its name from its eternal durability—profound in his meditations, shallow in the crown of his sombrero; “stately in his courtesies, and scanty in his nether apparel.” Such was the melancholy padre *in personâ*.

Well, then, it happened that one day we were at the identical bazaar, spoken of in a previous work, as the extensive property of “General Jackson,” when the church dignitary under discussion entered. Never was a philan-

thropic question put to mortal man, with more aptitude, than that which the great general addressed to the priest, when his sombre shadow first fell across the threshold.

“Padre, will you smile?”

The padre’s risible organs relaxed not, but he bowed his head profoundly, and stalked back of the counter, where I am inclined to believe that, if the term “smile” referred on that occasion to taking a drink of spirituous liquor, as I am told it sometimes does, the padre smiled long and frequently. At any rate, when he came forth again into the Gentile world, his eyes had a dancing gleam in them, quite different from anything which we had before remarked in that locality; and his body swayed to and fro, as he propelled, as if in sympathy with some internal mirthfulness.

Out walked the regenerated padre into the open sunshine—for there are times when there is sunshine at Chagres—as has been before remarked.

There was a schooner lying directly in front of the General’s emporium, with a plank stretched from her rail to the shore. “Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad,” is an old proverb, and just as certain is it that when a man is “wrong,” “sick,” “shot in the neck,” or whatever little misfortune of a like nature he may be afflicted with, these same gods invariably instil into his mind a wilful and unconquerable determination “to walk a plank.” But not to wrong our padre, or scandalize his sacred office, it is but fair to remember that this propensity may proceed from other causes. We have it upon no less authority than that of Mr. Richard Swiveller, that the mere fact of a man’s “having the sun in his eyes,” may so confuse his perceptions, as to put him in quite a lamentable plight. Be that as it may, the priest saw the plank, and all the boatmen in Chagres would have been powerless to dissuade him from an attempt to walk it.

The General and his clerk were watching him from the door.

"Steady, Padre," said the General, as the padre first tried the plank to assure himself of its steadiness.

"Steady, old boy," said Fred.

"He'll never get aboard," said the General, for the padre appeared to have a dead beat of it.

"Perhaps he'll have a little more soap on his boots," suggested Fred.

But he seemed to have quite soap enough, for at the same moment the vessel gave a rather sudden lurch inward, which joggled the plank, and was the means of precipitating the ambitious dignitary into the muddy water of the river. The water was not above the padre's height in the spot where he fell, but yet he contrived somehow to get his head under two or three times; and each time that that sallow appendage emerged from the plunge, his straight Indian-like hair seemed to have acquired an extra tenacity, and stuck to his hollow forehead and cheek-bones like bark to a young tree.

The General was inwardly delighted and outwardly shocked, and toddled off some distance up the levee to get a boat, while Fred, who took the matter very coolly, as a thing which he was quite prepared for, picked up a boat-hook in the store, and proceeded to the bank to fish up the unfortunate priest. Before attending to his case, however, Fred attacked the floating beaver, which bringing safely to shore, he there elevated with his thumb and forefinger as if it were a foot-ball, and gave it a kick which sent it soaring to a distance of some fifty feet down the levee, where it was picked up by a party of stragglers, who made off with it—probably to carry out the joke. He then applied himself to the saturated padre, and having got a secure hold upon the seat of his trowsers, had no difficulty in bringing *him* to land.

But what a plight he was in! His shiny black suit seemed pasted to him like so much court plaster. To say that he was drenched, soaked, or saturated, would convey no correct idea of his thoroughly humid condition. Here was a damp, moist, watery sort of a padre. You might have wrung out of the stitching of one of his button-holes, more liquid than a contemplation of all the sins and miseries of the human race would ever have squeezed from under his eyelids.

Jackson, who now hove in sight, sculling a boat under the vessel's stern, seeing at a glance the state of things, suggested to Fred, with his customary forethought, that the padre should be taken into the shop and treated to something warming. Whereupon Fred drew one of the padre's arms within his own, and shouting "Come along, old gal," to the infinite amusement of those boys standing around, whose early days had been spent in the neighborhood of the Bowery, lifted his right leg once or twice to a right-angular position with his body, and brought it firmly back to the ground again, before really setting out, intending thereby to give a farcelike character to the whole transaction. So much devoted was Fred, nevertheless, to his employer's interest, and so anxious to carry out his orders in the most literal manner, that having got the unfortunate padre safe into the shop, he contrived to get two glasses of the General's worst brandy down his, the padre's, throat, before the proprietor of the establishment appeared.

"Now, then," said Jackson, puffing with his unusual exertion as he came in. "we'll see what we can do for this poor devil in the way of a little something to drink, eh, mio amigo."

"Con mucho gusto," said the padre, and he dispatched two generous glasses more.

"Now for a change of clothes," said the General.

"His toilette shall be attended to," said Fred. "Walk this way."

With much difficulty the padre was got up stairs, where Fred in a business-like manner proceeded to strip him, calling at the same time upon Jackson for such unclerical robes as his "striped shorts," and "bottle green cut away."

"But," said the General, suggestively, "your clothes will answer better."

"Nonsense," said Fred, "mine 'll fit him."

"True," said the General, "they may be considered open to that objection."

"Ain't these clothes rather large?" asked the padre, in bad Spanish, and a misgiving tone, as he cast his eye upon the baggy-looking cast-offs of Jackson.

"Large!" said Fred, "just wait till you're full-rigged—large—well done—pretty fair."

"But," said the padre, "they look so——"

"Wait till the pillows are in, and you'll see," said Fred.

Fred had by this time got the church dignitary into shirt, drawers, and stockings, and now proceeded to apply two pillows to his lank frame in order to make Jackson's garments stick, as he observed.

"Is this the way people wear their clothes in America?" inquired the padre.

"Of course it is," said Fred. "Now, then, my boy, raise your leg a little—so, now the other," and the ordinarily black-robed official was encased, so far as his nether extremities went, probably for the first time in his life, in a pair of striped trowsers.

"Shall we furnish him with a waistcoat?" asked Fred.

"There is my old mouse-colored velveteen," observed Jackson, "if that would be appropriate for him."

"Oh, quite so," said Fred, and the mouse-colored velveteen was brought forth and donned.

"And now for the coat," said Fred.

The coat was likewise adapted without difficulty, and the priest stood before us, a very fat man in his paunch and rear, but with extraordinarily thin extremities. His head looked like that of a man who had lost his own and was trying on several, and having pitched upon one which did not accord at all with his general appearance, was keeping it on a moment just for the fun of the thing. His trowsers being too short in the legs and his coat as much too scanty in the sleeves, displayed to full view his meagre wrists and ankles, which, taken in connexion with his general wooden appearance, made one almost think him to be an image which had somehow been exposed in the night-time, and for whose dilapidated extremities the rats were answerable. The matter of the ankles, however, was remedied by Fred, who enticed the unwary padre into a pair of Jackson's high boots, leaving a portion of the striped trowsers inside of the same. Nothing was now wanting but a hat. Two were produced, or rather one hat, and one cap. The hat was of a dirt color, whether originally so or not I cannot say, of a low round top and broad brim, *à la California*. The cap was a thin one, of a light-colored cloth, and of the style denominated "skull." The hat was decided on as the most appropriate, and the padre's costume was complete.

I have been thus particular in describing the making up of this ghostly functionary on this occasion, because in a quiet, humorous way, it was equal to anything I had lately seen. The idea of this bundle of dry bones in the shape of an old Spanish padre being clothed in baggy striped trowsers and a bottle-green coat of the latest Newmarket cut with metal buttons; why the little incident of Mr. Sleek

of the "Serious Family" being invited out to have "a jolly good time," by Captain Maguire, was nothing to it.

But to shorten this lengthy narrative of a very trifling incident, I will just add, that the padre, not being accustomed to his new suit, fell in getting down stairs, and took an internal application of brandy and water for his bruises, after which he sallied forth to look up a boat to take him to the other side. Misfortune does not always command the deference which is its due. As the padre left the hospitable establishment of General Jackson, I am compelled to say, as a faithful delineator of facts, that quite a concourse of those boys, before alluded to, as having probably been educated near the Bowery, received him with shouts bordering on derision, accompanied with such observations as: "Halloa, old gal, you round again!" "I say, Friar Tuck, hold on a bit, I want to confess." "When is the next cock fight?" "Come on, old lady, take my arm," and many another of the same elevated tone.

"Speaking of blacklegs," said Tom to me that evening, as we were sitting together after a very promiscuous dinner, "you should have seen the old priest to-day when he came across. Such a figure!"

"How was he dressed, Tom?"

"Dressed! Well, he had on a trotting coat and wore his trowsers inside of his boots, a California hat—and let me see—yes, a money belt strapped round his waist, with a dinner knife stuck in behind." (This last item was an embellishment of Tom's.)

"Well, if the clothes fitted—"

"Oh, they were a capital fit: but somehow the priest was considerably swollen. I should think he had eaten a peck of dried apples for breakfast, and done nothing but drink all the morning. Then he was so solemn under it all."

“ Well, Tom, what happened ?”

“ Why, just after he landed, he met a troop of his apostles going in sheets and lighted candles to do what the doctors had not quite finished with a sick Frenchman, a few doors above here. The priest wanted to beg off, but it was no use, go he must, and just as he stood ; it was great to see him.”

“ And I suppose they finished the man at once ?”

“ No, they didn't : it appears that the Frenchman, seeing the priest on such a regular time, came to the conclusion that there was something worth living for, after all, and has been getting better ever since.”

“ Now, Tom, what should you say if I should tell you that water—nothing but water—was the cause of that strange metamorphosis in the priest's costume ?”

“ Well,” answered Tom, thoughtfully, “ I suppose that I should have to believe you, but I would much rather that you wouldn't test my powers of credulity exactly in that way.”

CHAPTER XI.

DEVELOPMENTS.

THERE was nothing particular to detain us at Chagres ; and so on the morning after our return from our bootless tramp in the woods (it was literally such to poor Allen), Tom and I crossed the river to arrange for barges to take the camels and ourselves to Gorgona. It was a fortunate circumstance for us that no steamers were in at the time and none expected for some days, and we were on that account enabled to obtain conveyance at a comparatively reasonable rate. Still the expense was enormous. But the gentleman with whom we engaged was a dashing sort of speculator, and made the payment of our freight so very accommodating that we felt ourselves particularly lucky again in falling in with him. Poor fellow, he is since dead, and his partner likewise. He had buffeted the rude world long and bravely in many another wild spot, and had come to Chagres for his death wound. I fancy it was a certain rough chivalric idea of being the topmost hero somewhere, that had brought him hither. But however that may be, he did us a good turn, and he will sleep none the less lightly in his grave for that.

We engaged six barges for our camels and one for ourselves and luggage, and completed our arrangements for taking a fresh start early next morning, by which means, the

proprietor of the barges informed us, we would reach Dos Hermanos by night-fall.

Tom and I then went round to the Empire City Hotel, to inquire after our old friends. We had been away from the American Chagres only two days; but two days in Chagres are equal to—what shall I say?—often to years in other places, so suddenly are great changes there wrought; and these two days of our absence had been by no means deficient in incident.

Whom should we behold on turning the corner but the veritable Quanto Valley himself, seated upon the piazza of the hotel, with his hat off, his chair slightly tilted backward, his legs reposing upon a second chair, and himself employed mechanically in picking his teeth, while he evidently revolved something in his mind to his entire satisfaction.

“Mr. Vale,” said I, grasping his hand cordially, “how are things, my dear fellow?”

“Ah!” exclaimed he, on recognising us; “so you are back already. Well, I am not the man to make a person feel unpleasantly by alluding to any little failure he may happen to have made, by an error in his calculations, although you will recollect that I—”

“Oh, perfectly,” said I, smiling; “but where is Parkins?”

“Ah, true, Parkins—well, Parkins is sick, and there’s no knowing where he’d ha’ been by this time, if it hadn’t ha’ been for me.”

“Hovering about his couch like a ministering angel,” observed Tom, poetically.

“And where is Parkins now?” inquired I; for it did not seem to agree with the fitness of things that Vale should be enjoying such excessive complacency, while Parkins might be writhing with pain—perhaps dying alone, in agony of soul.

"Well, just now," replied Vale, "Parkins is up stairs in the room occupied by young Vitti before the blow-up here."

"What blow up?"

"Why, the great affair of the day—the elopement—the murder. Why, I tell you what; there's the material here for a whole fashionable romance, in six volumes. I have half a mind to write it out myself. What do publishers—"

"Nonsense, man; what are you talking of? Have Angelo Vitti and his sister actually left this house?"

"Of course they have."

"And who is the present landlord?"

"I am."

"Now, come, Vale, my good fellow; I am greatly interested in this matter. Sit down here, and tell me all about it. Vitti has gone, eh?"

"Yes, Vitti has gone. But, to begin at the beginning, the same day that you left, Vitti's sister—that young girl, you recollect, that nursed the *Parlevous* Count, after he was fished out of the water by Vitti—well, she was missing. She was away from the house the whole day. Vitti was dreadfully troubled about it; for she wasn't used to be off by herself, and never without his knowledge. Nobody could explain anything about it. That same night, after dark, *Parlevous*, he gets a canoe, takes his saddle-bags with him, and off *he* goes to join her at some rendezvous agreed upon."

"Stop; how do you know that?"

"Why, they didn't go together."

"But how do you know that there was an understanding between them as to eloping in this way?"

"I guess there's no other way of accounting for it."

"Go on."

"Yesterday morning, when Vitti found this out, he lashed round in great style. I thought he was crazy. Nothing

would do but he must have a boat, and go in pursuit; and he swore a terrible oath, that if any wrong had been done to his sister by old *Parlevous*, he'd have his heart's blood, if he swung for it; which he wouldn't be likely to do down here. Hark! there's Parkins up."

"Never mind Parkins; go on with your story."

"But I was to have bled Parkins when he woke."

"Let his blood alone, and take care that *you* don't commit murder. Go on with your story, sir."

"Let's see. I was telling you that Vitti was off after them. It seems that he overtook them at Dos Hermanas—that is, he didn't find his sister, but he found *Parlevous*, and was so enraged to think that his sister had been made away with, that he murdered him on the spot. That was last evening. A boat left soon after, and arrived here this morning with the news."

"A very likely story, Mr. Vale!"

"You don't believe it, then?"

"Precious little of it."

"But you believe that the Count is dead?"

"Yes."

"And that Vitti killed him?"

"No."

"Well, you believe that Carlotta Vitti has run away?"

"Yes."

"And that she eloped with the Count?"

"No."

"Well, I have told you all I know about it. Now, I must go and doctor Parkins."

"Stop a moment. Where is your friend, the snake man?"

"Devil knows, perhaps—I don't."

"Go ahead; I'll be with you in a moment."

Here was a pretty batch of developments, strung together

at rather short notice. Something of all this I had expected, but certainly not to this extent. Why, it was like the atmospheric freaks at Chagres. At one moment, the softest, balmiest sunshine; and the next, a black, cloud-walled arch, and the most terrible lightning and thunder. I breathed short under the influence of it; I knew not what to think. As for action, I was powerless to move. That there was some great mistake somewhere, I was perfectly satisfied; but what was it? How could it be brought to light and cleared up?

While my mind was staggering under this load of doubt and mystery, and I was fairly working myself into a fever, in attempting to get at some satisfactory interpretation, I heard the voice of Vale, calling upon us to come up stairs. We immediately obeyed, and there was Parkins in a long nightshirt, shivering and sallow, sitting upon the sofa, with his feet in a bucket of water. It was evident that his feeble show of opposition to his old partner had all faded out, under the influence of the fever, and he regarded Vale with the querulous respect which a sick child evinces towards its nurse.

"What is this, Parkins?" said I cheerily, by way of raising his spirits; "a little under the weather, eh?"

"Sick," said Parkins, in a feeble, melancholy tone, "very sick."

"And what is this operation of soaking the feet for, Vale?"

"That's to relieve his head," answered Vale; "I gave him physic yesterday to relieve his bowels, and am going to bleed him directly to relieve his system generally."

"And you're in a fair way to relieve him of his system altogether, Vale."

"I think I know something about doctoring," replied Vale,

indignantly ; “ didn’t I have fourteen men with me on board of the steamer from New York—men that I was taking to California on shares, and paying their passage through—and didn’t I preserve them all in an excellent state of health by doctoring.”

“ Yes,” said Parkins, with a faint smile, for even in his great debility he could not resist the opportunity to make a point against Vale ; “ you doctored them rather too much for your own interest. You see,”—continued Parkins, turning towards Tom and myself, “ Vale used to give these men bit-
ters three times a day, an hour before each meal, and being steerage passengers, they could not get enough at table to satisfy their appetites after this extra sharpening, and so made an agreement for additional board with the cook, at the rate of four dollars per week, which of course Vale had to pay ?”

“ And what has become of those fourteen men ?” inquired Tom.

“ Vamosed,” said Vale laconically, to whom the subject was an unpleasant one.

“ Now, see here, Vale,” said I, to bring the subject back to the starting point, “ the course you are pursuing with Parkins will certainly result in his death. Just for once allow me to know more than you can be expected to. This man has got chills and fever, his liver is torpid, and requires some active medicine to rouse it to a healthy state, after which a few doses of quinine will effectually break up his fever, and if he behaves himself in future, he may go on his way rejoicing. But I do not undertake to prescribe. My friend Dr. G——, who is very successful in his treatment of these cases, will soon put him all right ; whereas if you persist in your treatment, you will kill him.”

“ Very well,” said Vale, who indeed was easily persuaded into anything, “ you may call your friend the doctor. As

landlord of this hotel, I have about as much as I can attend to, any how."

Parkins brightened up amazingly, as much from seeing his old partner and adversary put down, as from a prospect of getting actual relief in a legitimate way. Shortly after I met Doctor G——, and first receiving from him a confirmation of Vale's developments, I dispatched him to the rescue of Parkins, which I am happy to be able to say, he accomplished in a few days.

During the remainder of that day and evening, I staggered about like a man who, having eyes, saw not. I was completely bewildered by the news which I had heard. If this Marquis de G—— was murdered, and there were reasonable grounds for suspecting Vitti, I was not so sure of his not swinging for it, as Vale seemed to be. At Chagres people act mostly from personal feeling or impulse, upon which there is no counting with any certainty as to results. But that frail and delicate girl, one half of whose thoughts and affections were in Heaven, and the other half occupied with the holiest duties of earth, who was not, I was sure, a guilty party in this strange affair—what had become, or what would under any supposable circumstances become of her?

CHAPTER XII.

CHAGRES RIVER.

A BRIGHT, sunshiny morning; fresh, dewy, breezy, but especially sunshiny. The ripples of the lazy old river were bright and merry in the warm, clear beams of the morning sun; the banks of the river, in their evergreen garb, were laughing through the tears of last night's dew, and thrusting forward bouquets of the most gorgeous flowers, some of them golden-hued as the sun himself—their tribute to his loving majesty. The early birds were all cawing, chirruping, and twittering, for his first beams had penetrated their little hearts, and made them beat thus audibly for joy—and certainly there was sunshine in our hearts too, as we floated so luxuriously along, with the bending river beckoning us forward by new beauties at every turn; and the cool sea-breeze chasing us astern, while the tide, setting inward, did all the work of our journey, and we had a pleasant suspicion that the dipping oars was a mere accompaniment thereunto. Sunshine in our hearts, I say, for I am sure it was reflected plainly enough outwardly upon our faces, as we sailed so blithe and merrily up the Chagres river.

Morning on the river! It was as fresh and vivid in its coloring, as if that very morning was the first since the world rose up purified from the deluge. Its breath was as pure and sweet as if the forgiving angel had but just then breathed over it, while he pronounced its future everlasting

exemption from the external visitings of its Creator's wrath. There is no land—only trees, and creeping vines, and long waving streamers, and strangely twisted boughs, that seem to have root nowhere, but in a grotesquely sportive mood, to have flung themselves into the heaps of verdure, and there lain saucily ever afterwards; and such great hanging bunches of the mistletoe and moss, with red and yellow leaves of flowers, asking only such a little place to look up from towards the sun. And overhead there is no sky, but a deep sea of ever-deepening azure, where the lordly sun himself, without whose presence this world of beauty would not care to put on its richest charms, is floating serenely upward. And we feel our divinity stirring within us, for at our will we move onward, and leave behind us this other form of God, which has no will or power to follow. Truly, if in crowded cities man feels so bitterly his miserable insignificance, here in the plenitude of nature's realms, where his heart beats full and responsive to every breath of her exquisite harmony, and his eye gives beauty to her every feature, and yet his will is there to say how long this dalliance shall last; here he feels that there is nothing wanting but a child-like obedience and faith, to become so very great—almost a part of God, and accept the earth, even as it was meant to be his to beautify, and love, and bless.

The picture of that morning on the river is painted in unfading colors, and framed and hung away in one of the chambers of my memory, and I shall never look upon it but with pleasant associations. Hour after hour rolled languidly, but not heavily away, and still we floated onward. The first flush of excitement passed off, and we saw things in a clearer point of view. There we were, creeping along, our seven barges close up under the left bank of the river, sometimes even shooting in beneath the over-reaching branches

of great trees, and sailing for a rod or two, as it were, in the shadow of a rustic arbor, and a moment afterwards obliged to sheer out towards the middle of the stream, to avoid some decayed and fallen trunk. There was a presentiment in our minds, too, as of another boat skirminishing on our right flank, now dashing by us at an alarming rate, and now drifting like a log, and allowing us to come up with it—a huge canoe manned by natives, and freighted as it seemed to us with our old comrades—Judge Smithers, Colonel Allen, Monsieur Crapolet, and Thom (for it seemed that Mr. Arthur Orrington was somehow not amongst them). Between this boat and ours there was quite a frequency of communication. Articles of trifling value, such as eggs, oranges, and the like, were occasionally thrown to and fro; but the great feature in this friendly intercourse seemed to be the passing of a bottle, attached to the end of a stick, which idea I think originated with the other boat, and which, however inconvenient it at first appeared, was attended with very cheerful results. There was, likewise, a suspicion in our minds that one of the native boatmen, in the other boat, who had, in the excitement of the moment, so far forgot himself as to take off his shirt, was uttering something every now and then, which he meant for music. It would have been very dreadful at any other time, but we were all so pleasantly disposed that we merely stopped our ears and laughed, and tried to think of something else. After the gymnastic exercise of the bottle had been gone through with to considerable extent, the Colonel in the other boat made himself rather disagreeable, by shouting at intervals, each time in a different tone of voice, “Go it, ye camels!” evidently confounding that expression in his mind with the popular phrase of “go it, ye cripples.”

Noon came. It was hard now to avoid the sun’s search-

ing glances, though we crept ever so close under the river's bank. Alligators were now and then seen stretched sleepily out to bask in his beams ; and once we saw a cold, slimy-looking serpent come up out of the water and go winding and twisting in among the mangrove bushes of the shore. Ugh ! how loathsome and snaky did he look. We began to be tired of sitting so long in our boat, although there was often a breeze which, sweeping over the river, and whistling in beneath our awning, caused a delicious coolness. About the middle of the forenoon we had passed a bit of a clearing where were a few native ranches, and a row of cocoa-nut trees on the river's margin ; but we did not go on shore there, although the occupants of the other boat did, and Colonel Allen was a shade more boisterous afterwards. The conduct of Monsieur Crapolet during that morning reminded me of Major Monsoon in Charles O'Malley, and " what between a little sleep and a little something to drink," I have no doubt that the time passed very pleasantly with him.

All of a sudden we found ourselves at Gatun, a filthy, insignificant little hamlet of some half a hundred huts. Here we disembarked, and having picked our way up the bank, and selected a vacant lot, Monsieur Crapolet and Thom set to work installing the cooking-stove and its never-failing accompaniment, the black curtain.

" Gatun," said Colonel Allen, whom we found planted in about the centre of the place with his hands in his pockets, repeating to himself, as if reading from a geographical school-book ; " a small village situated on the banks of Chagres river, famous for the healthy state of the vegetation by which it is surrounded."

And the Colonel had got its measure pretty correctly. I am not aware that there is any particular department of industry in which its inhabitants excel, except that of smok-

ing. All who were not cooking or eating, were smoking during our stay, at all events ; but it may be that they never work laboriously during the heat of the day. The interior of their huts was very similar to those of Chagres, a box or two less, perhaps, in proportion to the number of persons to sit down, a greater quantity of jerked beef strung along under the eaves, some bunches of corn, a hammock, a couple of dry hides, a shelf containing bottles and small glasses, an iron kettle on the ground floor, a notched pole for a staircase to the attic chambers, a boat paddle or two, several piccaninnies of both sexes in a state of blissful nudity, from one to half-a-dozen women in white cotton dresses, profusely adorned with ruffles and flounces, and a full-grown member of the male sex, the extreme scantiness of whose attire reminded one of the costume of a Georgia Major—"a shirt collar and a pair of spurs."

There was a sprinkling of domestic animals about the settlement : a few cows, several raw-looking pigs, and an endless quantity of hairless dogs, for, as Tom maliciously observed, no Connecticut provision dealer had as yet thought it worth his while to establish a factory at that place. There was an American hotel at Gatun, in the outskirts of the town, above us on the river, which hotel was a piece of tarred canvas set up on poles. There was a tree in front, and the unfortunate proprietor had caused a large lantern to be rigged thereunto, which he was in the habit of illuminating at night, as a kind of *ignis fatuus* for unwary travellers. About ten people could stand in the shade of this tent when the sun was not directly overhead ; but during a heavy rain, I think not more than half that number could find protection. This was the only house of consequence in the place.

We had quite a laugh at a little incident which occurred as we were on our way back to dinner, in which Colonel

Allen was one of the performers. A particularly stupid-looking native, who was sitting at the door of a ranche, and had been for some time regarding us all in a sleepy sort of way, at length rose and made his way towards Allen, as if he had been revolving some enterprise in his mind, and had finally pitched upon his man. By a variety of energetic signs, he gave Allen to understand that he wished to see him at his house. We all accompanied the Colonel, prepared to stand by him to the last. The native entered first, and going to a corner of the room, produced an umbrella, a very shaky and shabby affair, which he exhibited to the Colonel, making signs for him to open it, and repeating eagerly "*no quiera comprar? no quiera comprar?*" "The subscriber" was quite dumb-founded. Even the native saw in him the unmistakable signs of a dilapidated gentleman. That particular umbrella alone was wanting to complete the picture.

Afternoon, and again upon the river. Hour after hour, floating amid the same wealth of vegetation, but in how many thousand different forms. And the sun—what a frisky sun he was during that afternoon—now right ahead, settling gradually down behind a high mountain, now on our right hand, again on our left, and pretty soon looking straight at our boat's stern, from above a broad range of forest directly in our wake. We had a small shower of rain towards sundown, and the refreshed air with which every leaf, and shrub, and tree within sight, lifted up its head, and stood erect afterwards, made me think of a great caravan or a vast army in the desert, worn, and dusty, and ready to faint, coming suddenly to quench their thirst at an oasis. There was the same marked appearance of relief and elasticity in every minutest part as in the general whole.

And at length twilight came, and we were still upon the

river. The sun was already gone down, and the river and its banks wore a darkened melancholy aspect. We rolled up our awning, and watched from afar the coming of the starry evening. The air was getting heavy with the night dew, and it was quite cosy and comfortable to draw out our greatcoats and shawls for protection from it. A different species of birds from those we saw in the morning, were now heard warbling among the bushes; but when one flew across the stream, we could only see its graceful winged form, but nothing of its variegated plumes. And as the darkness deepened, the lesser lights of heaven began to twinkle over-head, and the broad river looked black except where at times there was a silvery ripple on its bosom, and the sea of foliage on either side was a dark rolling mass. Often it looked as if we were approaching the termination of the stream, for the banks ahead seemed to meet, as if it were an inland lake on which we sailed, until we reached the next sharp bend, when lo! a long stretch of dark silent water, terminating as before in a sombre and apparently impassable wall.

It was real comfort to see the Major during that day's sail. One could not help feeling some effects of the enthusiasm which momentarily broke away from him, enveloping him as in a magnetic sphere. He knew every winged form that presented itself to our view, though many of them he doubtless saw for the first time. And while he revelled in intense appreciation of each and all of those glorious expressions of mother nature, his little wife, with her inspired pencil, fastened them, all aglow as they were with verdant and rosy life, upon the pages, to which, "in after years, if solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief, should be *his* portion," he might turn for sweetest consolation.

A splash in the water alongside of the other boat, and

almost instantaneously afterwards a much heavier splash, and the huge black canoe has ceased its progress, allowing us to come alongside.

"What's broke?" inquired Tom.

"This miserable sinner of a Frenchman," replied Colonel Allen, in a thick tone of voice, suggestive of "railroad-pudding" or "steerage-fare," "by his awkward manner of assuaging the pangs of thirst, has knocked one of the subscriber's pistols into the river."

"The subscriber," be it here remarked, had been somewhat more quiet vocally, since leaving Gatin, but had acquired instead a very unpleasant as well as dangerous habit of discharging his pistols about every other minute. It appeared that the second plunge was taken by one of the native boatmen diving after the lost weapon, which he presently reappeared with, and we continued our journey.

About an hour afterwards, on turning a bend in the river, we saw looming through the darkness on our left hand, another of those great delusive lanterns, which intimated that another American hotel was somewhere in the vicinity. This place, which contained likewise several native ranches, and had quite steep and slippery banks, was Dos Hermanas, distant from Chagres about twenty miles.

The other boat was in before us. When we had landed, I noticed that Colonel Allen and Monsieur Crapolet remained on board of their craft, and that the latter gentleman was stretched at full length upon the baggage, apparently taking a little repose, while the former leaned upon his arm, and in a confused kind of way appeared to be looking about in quest of adventures.

"Asleep?" said I, pointing to Monsieur Crapolet. "No," replied Colonel Allen, "knocked down by a squall; the subscriber, ditto—can you lend the aforesaid half a dollar?"

Alas! &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOS HERMANAS.

CHAGRES fever is the meanest of all diseases. At least so said Tom, on the evening of our arrival at Dos Hermanas, and as he was, at the time, fairly in its clutches, his observation on the subject ought certainly to be entitled to credit. No sooner were we arrived under the canvas of the American Hotel, and seated on the empty candle and claret boxes which served in lieu of chairs at that establishment, than the premonitory chill began. At the same time a perfect torrent of water descended, beating furiously upon our roof, as if the Isthmus, and especially that part of it known as Dos Hermanas, had somehow been overlooked in the post-diluvian promise that the world should be destroyed by flood no more.

We were as yet supperless. Storm and darkness were reigning out of doors, that is figuratively out of doors, but really all around us, for the four tallow candles which stood upon the board at the bar, and the other board where a repast was to be served for us, gave out just glimmer enough to enlighten us vaguely as to our miserable position. All of us were tired, chilled and wet; separated from our boats by a blind, slippery path, and one of us with the Chagres fever. A truly delightful situation! Who wouldn't be weary of the monotonies of home when such piquant adventures can be had at almost any time of year, after only ten days' steaming from New York!

But as I was saying Chagres fever is the meanest of diseases. It has a sly, snaky way of making its approaches, and falls upon one at last like a serpent, enveloping and crushing him in its cold, sweaty folds. It makes a man feel pitifully mean, crouching under his blankets, and drawing towards the fire like an antiquated hulk, or to use another phrase of Tom's, "like a sick kitten to a hot brick." It is in one respect like sea-sickness or ghosts, no one believes in it till it touches him with its chilly finger. It lays its hand upon him, and how far off and unattainable seem the prizes of life, the pomp and honors of the world! He feels as if he had been guilty of turpitude to allow himself to be caught thus, and forced to be a sluggard, while others are so bravely at work all around. He is like a wounded man on the field of battle, turned over to the care of old women, while his gallant comrades press on and bear away the palm.

Tom's case, however, was a very light one, and it is due to him to say that he bore the affliction like a philosopher. We wrapped him well in blankets, and placed him upon the second cot of a tier which were planted in the rear of the bar, in order that the first might get the primary advantage of the drops of rain which trickled through the roof. He observed pleasantly, as we left him for a moment to take some refreshment, that when his tea was ready he would have it hot and without milk. This idea of Tom's was not original. He obtained it from a work entitled "A Guide across the Isthmus of Panama," wherein, among other things, the author perpetrates a cruel joke in advising all emigrants to California to abstain from milk while crossing the Isthmus. I wonder that this imaginative writer did not likewise caution them against too free an indulgence in porter-house steaks or nightingales' tongues.

The reader will be pleased to imagine us at table in the

dining-hall of this American Hotel. The board has been removed down towards the lee side, and the rain which beats in through and under the canvas to windward, is only disagreeable to us from the fact that it has caused a large puddle of water to locate in the immediate neighborhood of our feet. But what care we for the howling storm without, while seated at the festive board, spread with all the luxuries and delicacies of the season, ham, beans, salt mackerel, certain messes suggestive of a previous repast, resembling in the fragmentary parts of which they are made up what sailors term "lobscouse" and "dundy funk," and for vegetables and bread, what the same roving and rough-spoken class call, "hard tack!" In the way of drink, a very bitter and black kind of coffee, and a scurvy mixture which I think the middle-aged gentleman who waited upon us said was tea, although the question had not been asked by any one. The appearance of the cloth made one think that parties who had been used to the plains and did not understand the relative position of the plates, and knives, and forks, to the food before them, had been along that way, and kept up their old bivouacking habits. But I do not recollect that we saw anything worthy of remark in all this, and I don't think we should, if in lieu of half a score of pigs which navigated quite freely among the shoals of our legs, there had been the same quantity of tapirs. The truth of the matter is, that our moist and steaming condition was highly favorable to the generation of appetite, and without any unseasonable display of fastidiousness we drew up our candle-boxes and fell to, men, women, and children. I remember now that one of the ladies, on elevating a dish towards her olfactories, was rebuked by the middle-aged gentleman in attendance, who observed that they did not keep a Graham hotel, and the victuals were placed there to be eaten and not smelt of. I

cannot now say as to whether this remark was made crustily or humorously.

When we had finished eating, it seems as if I ought to say when we had been sufficiently fed, we began gradually to realize that it had cleared off; we drew out towards an opening in the canvas, and lo! a picture of serenest, freshest beauty met our view; those primeval forests on the further bank, rising up from their bath in the clear moonshine, and the river, not dark and sombre now, but circling and winding in among the nooks and bends, like a silvery band of vapor, such as one often sees near the base of mountains in the early dawn; while around us at Dos Hermanas, the cleared bluff with its rounded embankments, and its venerable mango and cocoa-nut trees, scattered in little groups upon its surface, was just one of those charming spots where old Kit North would have delighted to come and lie down in at the gloaming; and above us, what troops of stars were clustered at their posts, while the rising moon came slowly up, filling the whole heavens with their glistening presence, save where here and there "a sable cloud" was seen to "turn forth its silver lining on the night;" the very air partook of the genial spirit of the scene, and was odorous with the tribute of flowers and blossoms far beyond our ken. It was a scene to arouse none but good and tranquillizing emotions, and yet here, as we had been told, with these very surroundings, only two evenings previous, revenge had wrought out its hellish purpose in the murder of a brother.

We were shown the place where the deed was done—a native hut, a few rods from our hotel. We were further informed by our middle-aged gentleman that the murderer had been taken there, sitting beside the corpse and asking frantically of the lifeless clay for his sister, who was supposed to have left Chagres in company with him who was now no more;

that he had gone off passively with the party who arrested him, and neither avowed nor denied the act. We inquired if the French gentleman who had been murdered had anything of much value about his person, but our informant was not able to enlighten us upon that subject. He had no doubt of Vitti's guilt—not a bit of it, there was no one else about except a friend of the deceased, who had been the means of arresting Vitti, and had accompanied him back to Chagres. So much for the report of our middle-aged gentleman, who, like most of our acquaintances of that period, is now himself defunct.

I might go on to describe our visit to the Frenchman's rude grave, where he lay, poor fellow, far enough away from his ancestral halls; but, to confess the truth, I am a little ashamed of my murder scene; and were it not that, as a faithful delineator of facts, I have felt myself bound to introduce it, should have cautiously avoided it altogether. It may be, even now, that some hypercritical reader may credit the writer's fancy with this portion of his narrative; for, since the moment when the English Opium Eater classed murder as among the Fine Arts, it is unfortunately associated in the minds of many with something like romance.

And now that I am upon this subject, I will further say, what I omitted in its proper place, that on that same morning when our barges were rowing out from the muddy stream that flows by Chagres, on its southern boundary, we observed a crowd of people collected about the house of the Consul on the American side, and learnt, upon inquiry, that Vitti was there in custody, having been brought down the river on the evening previous. I felt the mean sensation of a man deserting a friend in need, when I suffered our barge to proceed up the stream without a word of protest. Perhaps to my intense desire to help him, I had no idea how; and to

unravel something of this horrible mystery, for my own satisfaction, may be attributed, in part at least, the expedition which I shortly afterwards undertook. And now to my narrative again.

Tom was progressing beautifully with his affair; the chill was off, and he was in a charming state of fever. The Major and I held a consultation together, and we came to the conclusion to treat him allopathically with calomel and quinine; although the Major, when the proper leisure and appliances were at hand, was most decidedly hydropathic.

"There is one difficulty in the way," said I—"we have no medicine."

"Perhaps the proprietor has some," suggested the Major.

No; he denied the charge emphatically; although I have no doubt that he had a large quantity, but had no idea of allowing the fact to become public. I was sure that the other boat had none without asking, as its passengers kept themselves in a wholesome state of preservation by quite another method.

While we were talking on this subject, and Tom was making believe that he was somewhere in a city where it was a real pleasure to be ill, by asking one of us occasionally to look out of the window, and tell him what was going on in the street, and if the grocery store opposite and the apothecary's on the corner were yet open, or to read him something funny from the evening paper, a man came into the hotel, who said he was an express-man, and had arrived at Chagres at about two P. M. in the steamship *Falcon*. He also informed the proprietor that the *Falcon* was to leave, on her return, the next morning, at eight o'clock.

At this piece of information, the Major suddenly rose up, and took me earnestly aside. "See here," said he, "it is a fine night. Would it not be worth while for some of us to

return to Chagres, and provide ourselves with a stock of medicine? We can lie over here till to-morrow afternoon, if required. This appears to be a ticklish climate, and there is no calculating upon the health of any one. This, however, is not the principal thing which I have to propose. Our women folks, as you know, have already exceeded their license in getting thus far on the Isthmus, the understanding having been, all along, that they were to return home from Chagres. Now, from what we have already seen, I am satisfied that this is no country for women and children to enjoy themselves particularly in; and if taken sick here, the attentions which they will require will cramp our movements, if no more serious results follow. I would therefore propose that they go down to Chagres with one of us to-night, and take passage on the Falcon, which, we learn, leaves early in the morning. They will, no doubt, object quite resolutely; but it is their good as well as ours which demands it, as it seems to me."

What one feels most strongly is not always most easily described. I shall therefore pass over the discussion which ensued upon this sudden but prudent proposition of the Major's. There was considerable skirmishing in words half playful, half earnest—perhaps, too, some tears; but it was finally settled. Our wills were forced to consent to what circumstances made necessary, and the dear companions of our previous toils and pleasures were to leave us. I was appointed to accompany them, and see them safely embarked on board the steamer, while the Major remained to take care of Tom.

The little business transaction which we soon afterwards had with the characters of the other boat was by no means a difficult one. We were to have the native canoe for our return to Chagres, and they were to come into our barge for

the remainder of the water route. We accordingly made the necessary transfer of baggage, under which head Monsieur Crapolet was classed for the time being; the natives not only consenting to the exchange, but, having received half their charter money in advance, and knowing that one steamer was just arrived at Chagres, and another momentarily due, for once in their lives rose superior to the "poco tiempo" doctrine, and became quite efficient men.

I was a little amused at a characteristic remark of Allen's, as he settled himself into the stern sheets of our barge. "Well," said he, half sighing, with the air of an extremely foggy philosopher, "*variety is charming*. When the subscriber is at home, he always takes brandy and water in the morning, with a bit of lemon and sugar in it, brandy punch in the afternoon, and *hot* brandy punch in the evening."

CHAPTER XIV.

A NIGHT ON THE RIVER.

WHAT with "more last words," and good-byes, and God's blessings called down in showers upon us all by turns, and shifting of baggage, and sundry lookings round to see that everything was right and nothing forgotten, it was near midnight when we were quite ready. We had hardly got adrift, when one of those pleasant little showers, so suggestive of violets and columbines in our spring-time at home, came pattering upon our boat and baggage, with a small sample upon our own persons, for *we* were but partially protected by an awning of palm leaves—and on the still, swift-running river alongside. It was impossible to say where it came from, for there was not a cloud in the star-studded sky, if we except, indeed, a sort of fleecy gauze-like shadow of the same which went drifting slowly by us overhead, just such an apology as one often sees during a long drought, when all signs fail. Nevertheless, there was the positive fact—rain; and as we did not see the necessity of getting wet, though it was done ever so mysteriously, we drew in alongside of a small steamer which was puffing and blowing at the river's bank, as if it had just arrived, and had had a hard time of it.

There was about the usual assortment of gold-seekers on her quarter-deck, keeping guard over an immensity of what the western people call "plunder," which was made up in this case of every variety of trunk, chest, bag, and box, with

not a few greasy-looking brown paper parcels, suggestive of lunch. Contrary to the regulations of most steamers, "smoking abaft the engine" was permitted on board of this boat, and the atmosphere was quite hazy in consequence. There were some muffled people in shawls and bonnets, dimly seen amidst the clearings of the smoke, whom we should have taken for women, had not their nether extremities been encased in trowsers.

There was a group of Missourians, from Pike County, gathered about the gangway, as we boarded, one of whom was telling a story; and a dapper little chap, with a profuse gold watch-guard and very shiny hair, who might have been a runner for somebody or something, appeared to take great interest in what he said.

"Now," said the Missourian, "there was old Pillcott, and he was another customer."

"Warn't he, though?" said the dapper little chap, pretending to know all about it; "Billy Pillcott."

"No; Jim," said the Missourian.

"Aye, true," said the dapper little chap, "Jim Pillcott."

Most of these people seemed to be well acquainted, and called each other by nicknames; some by the name of the county they hailed from, prefixing the epithet "old" thereunto, such as Old Pike, Old Clay, and so on; others got their title from some peculiarity of dress, and were vociferously appealed to as "Bob-tail," "Yaller-breeches," or "Steeple-crown." One poor fellow was quite unfortunate in his sobriquet. He was a cadaverous-faced man, and sat a little apart from the crowd, occupied in spreading the chest before him with bread, cheese, and ham. When he had laid out about a supply for three, he deliberately rolled up his sleeves, brushed back his long loose hair, as if he were buttoning back his ears, and prepared to fall to. This man was styled

by the crowd "Potatoe Parings," and during his repast was frequently called upon "to throw himself away." "You should have seen him' on board the steamer coming down," said one of his admirers to me; "Lord, how he would eat; it was like loading a gun. When he came to be sea-sick and throw up, we thought he would bust, and it was a wonder that he didn't, for he was charged to the muzzle."

In the sternmost extremity of the deck was another group, one of whom was explaining that he had just been robbed of two hundred dollars in gold, and showed how it had been cut out of his pocket; and an excitement immediately sprang up amongst his auditors for arresting somebody and charging them with the act; and as nobody was at hand, suitable for the purpose, but a poor deaf and dumb fellow, who went by the appellation of Dummy, he was accordingly seized upon, and would have been searched, notwithstanding his piteous signs and cries, had not Judge Smithers, who was on a stroll about the premises, followed by Colonel Allen, come suddenly on board, and peremptorily put a stop to it, while the pugnaciously-disposed Colonel squared off in the background, and observed that "Providence had not prevented the subscriber from dying of cholera two years previous, that he might see a poor devil bamboozled in that style with impunity."

Some were card-playing, some betting heavily on a sweat cloth, some indulging in an Ethiopian melody, one man cutting out portraits in paper at a dollar a-piece, another deep in the columns of the last *Herald*, and two or three eccentric individuals vainly endeavoring to compose themselves to sleep. It was a curious picture of life in the rough, just what some of the old Dutch painters would have delighted to depict. The silence of the night, save for the pattering rain drops; the lonesomeness of the place, which would have

awed to silence a smaller or less excitable party ; the grotesque strangeness of this chance meeting of so many different characters, yet bound together by a secret chord of purpose and sympathy ; the pale light of the moon, which, notwithstanding the rain, lay in broad squares here and there upon the deck, and was the only light by which the characters of the piece were seen, all helped to give effect to the striking picture.

As soon as the rain was over we were again adrift, floating midway down the swift running current of the stream. Its surface was by no means as smooth and tranquil as when we ascended, for the heavy rains of the night had made it swollen and rough, and in places where some tributary mountain torrent came pouring headlong in, was quite dangerous in its eddies. Nevertheless we floated rapidly along, keeping near the middle of the stream, where we had none of the counter current, and were not exposed to contact with boats coming up the river. The clumps of thick growing trees, and bushes on the banks, wore altogether a new and peculiar aspect. They took grand forms of wonderful architecture—houses, castles, and broad-fronted palaces, where the windows were the openings in their boughs, through which the moonlight shone. At times there was a long line of steep but level embankment, which looked like the grim walls of a fort ; and then came the houses, castles, and palaces again. We discussed the beauties and merits of each new style as it was revealed to us, and afterwards wondered among ourselves as to the dwellers in these strange dark habitations. We wondered, if in the silvery light which pervaded those apartments and shone through the windows, families were assembled in quiet comfort after the rude day's toil ; if there was music and literature in those unseen circles ; if little children sat on their father's knee

whiling away his thoughts from the hard world ; if the light and the fireside blaze—for it was chilly enough on the river to make us think of that also—which had no ruddy glare in them, but were cold and silvery, was on the whole as genial and comfortable as what our memories kept note of two thousand miles away ; if we should go up and knock at the door whether they admit us, and whether they would keep us standing in our dew-damp garments in the shivery hall, or turn us over to the servants, or introduce us at once to their own parlor, the more elderly looking affectionately upon us, while the young should regard us as invested with a species of romance, coming thus suddenly in upon them from the rapid, swollen river—and each should vie with the other to make us so very much at home.

Even while we were discoursing thus, and indulging our playful fancies, into which, nevertheless, there was woven a pensive half-melancholy thread, the heavy rain-clouds had been gradually mustering in the sky, and the towers and rounded domes and steeples of our imagined structures were visibly losing their distinct outline. The surface of the river seemed to have acquired a fresh liveliness, and the current an accelerated course. We were now in danger of coming suddenly upon some bigger boat, the shock of which in meeting might upset us ; and the bare possibility of having to struggle for life with those dark troubled waters, to reach the banks only for a more fearful and loathsome struggle with the alligators, snakes, or wild beasts of those parts, added much to the chilly discomfort of our position. In order to avoid this contingency our boatmen began to yell in the most savage and uncouth manner, which made us think that they had studied the music of the prowlers in the woods, with whose howling voices they had probably been familiar from childhood. Still we went on, our boatmen

pulling vigorously at their oars, in the hope of reaching Gatun before the worst—while the heavens, and earth, and water darkened about us. Our helmsman, who was a tall, gaunt native, of the true Ethiopian stamp, stood bolt upright in the stern, jabbering long sentences in a spiteful manner, as it seemed to us, at the oarsmen, at the close of each of which they sent up the unearthly yell before alluded to.

And now the rain began, a few big drops first, and then, as it were, a continuous sheet of water falling bodily from the sky. In such a rain as this, on this very river, boats have filled with water as caravans have been covered up by sand in the desert, and gone down beneath its surface, and with all their precious freight been heard of no more. God forgive us, we may fare no better. Our boatmen, however, are in no ways put out by it, but pull vigorously ahead, and occasionally address themselves to us and say, “*mucha agua*,” something in the same tone in which one observes at home that it is a fine day. When we become very cold and drenched, and are sure that we are all in the first stage of Chagres fever, we ask them how much farther to Gatun, and they invariably answer “*poco tiempo*.” But the water continues to pour down, and there is already a foot of it in the bottom of our boat, and we are soaked through, and our feet and ankles feel as if made of wood, and our boatmen go on howling, and the river goes on increasing every minute in its rapid course, till we know for a certainty that if we should strike a bigger boat, it will be all over with us—and still no Gatun! There was one boat which we passed lying under a big tree by the river’s bank, which showed a light, and hearing the howls of our boatmen, hailed us to know if we were going on. I answered “yes,” and a minute afterwards they hailed again to say that we were going *down* river, probably thinking that we belonged to their party, and had somehow

got our boat twisted in the darkness. A moment or two afterwards we saw Gatun.

There it was, quite another looking place from what it was when we left it on the afternoon previous. It seemed as if there were a thousand little dots of light, floating stationary in the darkness which enveloped it, and amongst them all was a larger light, which we decided must emanate from the lantern of the American hotel. Almost instantaneously after the first appearance of these lights, we were there, alongside of the bank, with some two score of boats on either side, and such shouting, yelling, blowing of horns, and other instruments, jabbering of natives, discharging of guns and pistols in quite a promiscuous manner, barking of dogs, and squealing of pigs, I never heard before. Truly, after our lonesome sail upon the river, in "night, and storm, and darkness," it was quite refreshing to feel ourselves again surrounded by such an unterrified body of the sovereigns of our native land. They made the old place redolent of riotous life and fun. They were everywhere about the diggings—smoking desperately in the rain half way up the bank, taking drinks, and smoking in their boats; others strong in Goodyear and Mackintosh, preparing to go out in quest of adventures, and inquiring of their neighbors in the next boat, where was the best quarter for door bells, knockers, and barbers' poles; others grouped in the vicinity of the lantern, in front of the American house; and others still among the lesser lights, trafficking with the natives, or bargaining for a night's lodging, in the apartments communicated with by the notched stick. There were, doubtless, some there who wished themselves away, home again in the quiet routine of their old life; but if so, they were of a retiring nature, and not noticed in the crowd who seemed bent on having a good time at all hazards.

"House ahoy!" sang out a big boat which had edged its way into the bank, directly alongside of us, hailing the lantern—"Any spare rooms?"

"How many are there of you?" replied a voice, which was not that of the proprietor.

"About thirty."

"Well, we can accommodate you." There was a roar of laughter followed, which we supposed was at this clever imposition, but it appeared that it was at a man with an umbrella, and a good deal of speculation was immediately set on foot as to where *he* came from.

"Now, then, supper for thirty," sang out the same voice from the adjoining boat, speaking again to the lantern.

"All right," returned the voice from the bank.

There were two Frenchmen in this boat, who were among the last to leave her. One was a very fat man, and the other a very thin one; but they were equally unsuccessful in getting up the wet and slippery bank. After two or three failures, they at length mutually agreed to try it together; so, locking arms, they once more started on their adventurous course. They were nearly at the top, when they again slipped and slid back to the bottom. "N'importe," said the fat one, as they started afresh, "nous allons bien souper."

"Oui," replied the other, "nous allons bien souper."

And off they went again, to return in the same abrupt and undignified manner. Poor devils, it was really too pitiable to think of what a wretchedly defective reed their supper was leaning upon. Every time they set off, it was with the same promise to themselves of a good supper awaiting them on the hill; but at length they gave it up, and I undertook to console them, by informing them of the true state of affairs in that direction. This they were very glad to believe, and had great sport over it. One of their party came

back soon after, and swore that there was not a mouthful of anything to eat in the place, and that the hotel was nothing more nor less than a hydropathic institution, where they charged two dimes for brandy and water, and threw in a small *douche* gratis.

All this time it was still raining, and without any signs of clearing up. It was out of the question for our women folk to think of landing; and except that we had plenty of company (which, the old proverb tells us, misery loves), we might about as well have been on our way down the river. So, when our boatmen returned, fortified with a copious quantity of aguardente, we acceded at once to their proposition to proceed. I was fortunately successful in negotiating with the supperless Frenchmen for a rubber cloth to cover our awning with, a pile of blankets for the women and children, and a bottle of Otard for myself, which appliances made us a shade more comfortable, at all events.

Again we looked out upon the thousand dots of light, now growing dim behind us, and heard more and more faintly the boisterous uproar of the motley crowd we were leaving—again we were alone with the river and the rain, with no sound save its beating on the stream and its shores, and the jabbering and howling of our boatmen, now more spirited than ever. How lonesome we felt again! There was something so chilling in the feeling, that we were actually alone with that same dark, silent, serpentine river that had sent desolation to many a hearthside afar, and was still flowing on at our very side, as merciless and remorseless as ever.

A huge, lumbering, black-looking object, directly before us, approaching us, almost upon us; and now a sonorous voice from it, calling out, "Starboard your helm—starboard!" which is answered by an increase of jabbering on the part of our helmsman, and a multitude of *curahos* from the oars-

men. It is alongside of us, and proves to be a large barge, with some twenty or thirty passengers. As we rush by, it gives us a parting lick on the larboard quarter, which has no other effect than to twist us a little out of our course, and give a livelier zest to the *carahos* of our boatmen. It has hardly got fairly by us, when a voice again comes from it, inquiring if we will take "Brown" along with us, as he has got enough of California, and wishes to return home; which cool proposition, as we have not previously known "Brown," and think it possible that he may not prove a desirable acquaintance, under the circumstances, I respectfully decline. We speedily lose sight of the great, black, lumbering barge, behind a bend in the river, and are only aware of its existence from the fact, that the plaintive echoes of "Rosin the Bow" are now dying away over the silent waters in our wake.

And it still keeps on raining, raining, raining; and our boat keeps up its speed, and our boatmen keep up their monotonous howling; and whether it be the Otard, of which we have all taken several sips; or whether it be that we have got used to the scene, and find it dull; or, what is more probable, are so wearied out after our long day's travel, that tired nature claims and will have her due; somehow or other, we all fall asleep. I say all; for I am sure that I kept awake until the last one finally dropped off, from pure exhaustion. I have an indistinct idea that, immediately after my departure for the land of Nod, a hand, as of the helmsman, was thrust into my top-coat pocket, where was the Otard before alluded to, and something taken therefrom. If this was the case, I am sure that it was the Otard, as that was gone when I awoke; although, of course, I might have been dreaming, and the Otard might have fallen out, and somehow got into the river.

How long we slept, I know not, but I, for one, had some

curious dreams. I dreamt that I was in a whaleboat on the Pacific, with Tom and the Major, steering for an island, which we had almost reached, full of fruits, and birds, and game, and turtle, and possessing a most delightful climate; and then I was alone, somewhere in the Gila country, travelling through the sand in quest of a great and wealthy city which I was sure existed somewhere in that mysterious region; and then I was scouring the pampas of Buenos Ayres, on a wild horse, without any particular end in view; and then I had finally come home a very rich, but sallow and sick old man, and I was lying in bed, while my only sister, who had not changed any in all these long years, sat placidly sewing at my side; and in every one of these scenes I was so tired and sad. And then I awoke, and we all awoke, and there was Chagres.

We came in to the bank under the stern of the brig "*Bella del Mar*," opposite to the Irving House. There was no one stirring on the levee, except about a dozen young fellows who had come down alongside of us to hear the news, thinking us to be from Panama. It had cleared off, and was so very bright and serene a night now, that our previous experience of "storm and darkness" seemed to have been but part of an unpleasant dream; and old Chagres, that miserable, vagabondish place, was of a verity to us "a sight for sair een." We could see, too, as easily as by broad daylight, that these young men were a little unsteady in their movements, as if overcome by liquor.

I inquired if we could get into any hotel at that hour, for I supposed it to be near dawn.

"Oh, we're bound to see you safe in," said half-a-dozen together; "we're going to the Irving, now, after Samuels—come along."

"Yes," said one of the number, in explanation, "we're on

a bit of a bender to-night. It's some anniversary, as near as we can recollect, and this dog of a Samuels slipped off at the opening of the third basket. So we're going to have him out and administer something wholesome."

"Come along," said they all together.

Under their auspices we landed, and followed by our natives carrying the baggage, proceeded to the Irving House, where our new friends kicked furiously at the door, and then made a formal demand for Samuels. But it appeared that Samuels was not forthcoming, and the exasperated proprietor refused to open his doors at that unseasonable hour, and treated the story of a party from down river being in attendance outside, with entire contempt. A council of war was then held by the besiegers; and the result was, that a large piece of joist was brought up from the bank by the whole strength of the company, six of a side, and thrust with all the vigor of the united twelve against the inhospitable door. The door did not yield at first, but the twelve did, and falling with the heavy timber upon them, one half of the number were considerably bruised. The second attack differed from the first, in that it was the starboard half in lieu of the larboard who received the timber this time in falling, and were likewise considerably bruised. Upon the third attack, the door was beaten in, and we all entered.

I presume that the young men were successful in their search for Samuels, for having occasion to go down stairs for a pitcher of fresh water, after we had retired to our rooms for the balance of the night, I saw a haggard and sleepy-looking gentleman perched upon a stool on the table, with his head firmly encased in a certain household utensil, which shall be nameless. I inferred from appearances, that he was about to be treated with a mixture of something which one of the party was preparing in a small basin, but what the whole-

some compound was, I did not learn. I saw the same individual the next day, with his head somewhat damaged and swollen, and am inclined to believe that the aforesaid utensil, having tightened upon his cranium after repeated potations, it was found necessary to break it thereon, before it could be removed. And this was one of the features of what the Chagres boys termed "a bender."

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH.

IT is, probably, hardly necessary for me at this stage of my narrative to say, that I have all along been quite free of apprehensions of suiting that self-sufficient and orderly class, whose ideas seldom go beyond their daily task; who can see no good out of their own private Jerusalem; who look with horror upon an adventure, or anything which comes to them, bearing the guise or savor of romance; who bear indelibly stamped upon their countenances the motto of the old lady who bought the *caul* of David Copperfield—"Let there be no meandering;" who, if they read at all, read to be instructed, to weigh down their memory with a load of facts; and have no undignified suspicions of what is included in the poetry, the drollery, the dreamery of life. On the contrary, it is confidently expected that this class of people will long since have thrown aside the book with a contemptuous "Fudge! Does the writer take us to be fools, that we should believe this mass of stuff?" These people consider nothing as worthy their attention but what lies within the very limited circle of their own observation or experience. They are the Thomases of the world, and require even to thrust their fingers into the print of the nails, or they will not believe.

As if oftentimes one single thought which the novelist pens in bitterest sincerity of heart, were not a thousand fold

more true, because more earnest, than all the dull acts of their unvaried life. As if, though they would smile to hear us say so, the very abject man of crime, when considered in relation to the strength of the temptations which he has withstood, and the more terrible strength of that temptation to which he finally succumbed, were not oftentimes more honest and virtuous than they.

I do not then deem it necessary to offer to the reader any apology for the unusual character which the incidents of the day I am about to describe may happen to possess. It is not my fault if they are somewhat strange. The world is a wide one, and there is not a day passes in any part of it, but bringeth forth far stranger things than these. And now having relieved my mind in a measure, by putting forth this disclaimer, or whatever you please to call it, I promise for the future to stick more closely to the thread of my narrative.

It was after three o'clock in the afternoon, before the Falcon was off on her home-bound flight, and I was on shore again in weary Chagres. My first visit on landing was to the Empire City Hotel, to see my old friends, Vale and Parkins, and get the latest reports from Vitti, who, as I had casually learned in the morning, was now confined in the old fort. I should have put up at the Empire on the previous night, but as hotel-keeping was a new business with Mr. Vale, I had an undefined apprehension that he might not have been successful in it, and that we should be more comfortable at the Irving, which indeed, at that time, was the model hotel of Chagres. In this it seems that I was not far wrong, for on arriving at my old loitering-place, I could not avoid remarking, at first sight, an air of nudity and forlorn abandonment, that would have been melancholy had it not been so beautifully characteristic of the pre-

siding genius of the place. The lower part of the house was deserted, and had a damp and dismal smell about it like a cellar. The bar-room was vacant, both of loafers and liquor. It was another failure in Vale's multifarious pursuits, and had it not been for a slip of paper, with a hand pointing to the staircase, and the words "not dead but sleeping," written thereon, and meant to be waggishly explanatory of the true state of things, I should have left the house under the impression that both Vale and Parkins had departed this place, if not in fact this life, for a better.

Pursuing the direction in which the hand pointed, I reached the chamber where I had already seen the French Marquis and poor Parkins in an unenviable state of health, to find there another candidate for the pleasures of illness, —even Senor Quanto Valley himself. He was stretched upon the sofa, with a table wheeled to his side, covered with a Napoleonesque assortment of maps, plans, and other documents, while his ex-partner, again upon his legs, thanks to the treatment of Doctor G——, officiated in the character of nurse.

"This comes of fillibustering it," said the latter as I entered, with a glance towards Vale, in which contempt and reproof were alike mingled,—“you see the old fool would make a public idiot of himself, by attempting the rescue of that madcap Vitti, and this is what comes of it.”

Vale was certainly rather the worse for his adventure, whatever it might have been, to which Parkins alluded. His huge face was gashed and torn in places, to the great cost of his hair and whiskers. One arm was in a sling, and from his manner of reclining, it was easily inferred that some other limbs had likewise suffered damage. Nothing put down, nevertheless, by the shattered position in which I had found him, he extended his whole hand to me in salu-

tation, and observed, with a happy smile, that there was no evil without an attendant good; and added, that Parkins would give me the particulars of the assault in which he led a body of determined men to the rescue of Vitti at the fort, which enterprise failed of success, through an unforeseen accident that befel the leader thereof; thinking, I suppose, in trusting Parkins with this narration, that I knew his weak points well enough to make due allowances for anything he might utter derogatory to the character or courage of him—Vale.

“Well,” said Parkins, taking up the tale in quite an enthusiastic manner, “the blasted old fool, yesterday afternoon, after having worked all the morning, like a nigger slave, as he is—to get Vitti *into* the fort——”

“For certain reasons,” suggested Vale, in a parenthesis, and with an approving smile.

“Must wheel suddenly right about face,” continued Parkins, “and plan a rescue for the same night. So he gets together all the young scapegraces of the place, gives them a free treat—gets most of them almighty corned——”

“Which explains the actual state of the bar,” I observed.

“Exactly—and then, just after dark, leads off for the other side. Such a set! There wasn’t one of them knew what they were going for, for old Quanto, with his usual bombast, had, towards the close of the treat, made a speech in which there was so much about the memory of Washington, Bunker Hill, principles of ’76, glorious 4th, and so on, that they were completely bewildered, and seemed to think it was some great anniversary, and that they were to celebrate it by firing off the guns of the fort, killing a few natives, or something of the kind. Why, some of the rowdiest came back after the downfall of old Quixote, and persisted in finishing our champagne, drinking ‘the day we celebrate,’ and such nonsense.”

"I met some of this class quite early this morning," said L.

"Quite likely—they had a charge sufficient for three days. Well, they got across the river somehow or other, and went staggering up the hill where the fort is, in the most absurd manner——"

"To the tune of 'I see them on their winding way,'" interrupted Vale, who was reviewing the exploit with his mind's eye, and evidently looked upon it as the event of his life.

"But as it happened," resumed Parkins, "just before they reached the moat, our great hero of a leader, in taking too much sheer in *his* winding way, went over the bank, and just missed breaking his preposterous neck. He had the luck, however, to fetch up against a projecting rock, which did the business for his right arm and left leg, and then they fished him back and brought him home, and a pretty mess I'm with it all!"

"So far so good," said Vale, with a complimentary smile in the direction of Parkins, "and now for the moral of the tale. For the injuries done to my person, in the attempt to save a fellow-countryman, from what I now believe to be unmerited punishment, the republic of New Grenada must answer. And, sir, I have this day perfected my plan. This fall of mine is not for nothing—I shall come up again. Yes, sir, I have perfected my plan for seizing this key to the Isthmus, and declaring it, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, a portion of our glorious republic, the birth-place of Washington, and which has given to the world the sublime spectacle of a successful effort at self-government, and a Fourth of July. There are those who wait but the promulgation of my project to second me. Sir, Napoleon, who was likewise a self-made man, in his younger days was wont to say, that if he could secure for his country the possession of Suez,

he would control the commerce of the East. Since the time of that very clever man—I think even Parkins will admit this—things have changed; the commerce of the East is destined to turn its face backward from its old path; and this Isthmus, which I am to declare ours, is the channel through which its immense wealth shall flow.”

While Mr. Vale was thus discoursing, in the delirium of fever, he had partly risen from his couch, and, with his left hand spread upon his maps and plans, seemed to forget his bodily pain, and to hold himself ready for the onset at a moment's notice. Parkins did his best to keep him down; but he too had the Chagres mark most unmistakably impressed upon him, and was feeble as a child. The desolate condition of these two men, attached thus strongly and strangely to each other, was not a scene to contemplate without emotion. I saw not the burlesque character of it exclusively; I felt more in the condition of Byron, when he said—

“And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
’Tis that I may not weep——”

“But,” said I, with a jerk as it were, for I saw the necessity of calming Vale by a change of topic, “how goes the hotel, my dear fellow—chock full, eh?”

“Why, not exactly,” responded Vale, seizing likewise upon this topic with alacrity. “I have an idea for a hotel.”

“There he goes again,” observed Parkins, despairingly

“I would build one out in the neighborhood of your old camel encampment, a hotel equal to any in the States, provided with all the comforts and luxuries of our own homes. Such a hotel as this would do more for this place, than all the prayers of the saints could effect in any other way. Just think of a poor devil, wet and weary, half dead with his fatigue of crossing the Isthmus, coming to a place like

home, as I mean to make the Atlantic Steamship Hotel; why, sir, he would stow away the proprietor's name in his heart, and keep it there always afterwards, as a benefactor of his race."

"Very likely," said I, "but you forget that this town will not last long. When the railroad is completed, Chagres must be abandoned for Navy Bay. No one would invest capital, as you propose, with such a prospect."

"Another idea," said Vale, eagerly, with the same delirious glitter in his eye. "What do you think of settling at Navy Bay—the first man, I mean the first regular permanent resident, and becoming the pioneer citizen of the place—I have thought of that too. What a figure I should cut at dinner celebrations, in later years, when the new city shall boast its hundred thousand inhabitants—I should be the Daniel Boone of the Isthmus. I should immortalize myself."

"Only, that you would starve several years before your tremendous greatness would have a chance to begin," observed the incorrigible Parkins.

In the course of the conversation which ensued, I obtained no further news of Vitti. He was still shut up in the fort, awaiting the time when he should be taken to Panama for trial. His sister had not been heard from. It was late for me to think of returning to Dos Hermanas that night, even if a boat could have been had, which, considering the number of passengers by the Falcon and Crescent City, was somewhat doubtful. And, as I was sure of an opportunity of proceeding early on the following morning by the steamer Ralph. Rivas, I resolved to go over to the fort at once, and communicate with Vitti, determined in my own mind to get at something which should serve as a clue to all this mystery. I left Vale and Parkins, not doubting but that I should see or hear from them again; but up to this

moment, I never have. Poor Sampson Vale—how pleasantly the foolish dreamer would smile at the application of this epithet to *him*—I often wonder if he is still above ground—leading the same old visionary life, chasing the golden-winged butterflies of his fancy, but never fairly grasping them, through the blustering world, with the weary Solomon dragging after, and almost blinded by the dust in his wake. And yet Mr. Vale, after all, was but one of a very numerous class in the world. The dread of being nobody is the bug-bear of their unhappy lives, and so they wear themselves away, the very nothingest of nobodies, simply because they are always hankering after something to which it is not possible they can ever reach.

It was raining heavily as, having crossed the river, immediately after the interview above narrated, I toiled up the steep rocky hillside leading to the fort. I think I never felt more spiritless and sad. The parting that day with those dearest to me on earth; the melancholy situation of our party on the river; the yet more melancholy one of the friends I had just left, and the situation of him I was going to see, most melancholy of all; my own solitariness, and perchance the presentiment of an approaching mishap; the dreary weather,—all combined to blacken the deep gloom which hung over me like a cloud. I picked my way along over the loose, slippery rocks, and felt desperate enough. Even when I passed the point on the bluff where Vale had slid off, my imagination was powerless to bring before me the ludicrousness of his adventure. I passed into the outer fortress over the tottering bridge, and went doggedly by the soldiers stationed at the gateway leading to the inner. I should quite have liked a bit of a row at that moment, to have waked me up a little; but the poor fellows on sentry were in no mood for anything of the kind. The idea of Vale attacking these

people ! One half of the liquor spent in treating the assaulting party would have bought a free pass for Vitti a dozen times over.

I was in no mood for admiring the excellence of the work ; its stupendous sea-wall, formed partly by nature ; its solid cemented floor ; its lines of dungeons under ground, running deep beneath the surface of the outer fortress ; its magnificent position, overlooking the broad fields of the Atlantic, and effectually protecting the hamlet couched at its base ; its heavy, time-stained guns ; its sentry-boxes, black and decaying, suggestive of so many long, weary hours of a soldier's life ; its piles of rusty balls ; its brick and cemented, but ruinous buildings ; its one other building, partly constructed of similar materials, and partly of wood, the quarters of the officers in the old time, the present jail of Chagres. It was a type of the power and magnificence of a past age, crumbling away before the higher power and truer magnificence of our own.

Not seeing any one in particular who seemed to be in any sort of authority there, I at once entered the wooden building, and passing up stairs, found Vitti alone in a bare and extremely desolate-looking apartment. He was half lying upon a cot with his head resting upon his arm, gazing moodily at the floor. My entrance caused a scampering among the cockroaches, who, emboldened by the prisoner's apathy, had ventured from their holes.

" Vitti, my old boy," said I, as cheerfully as possible, on entering, " how goes it, eh ? not altogether down-hearted, I hope ?"

As he raised his head and extended his hand to greet me, I could not avoid being struck with the great change which had come over him. He was thin, pale, and haggard ; but not quite given over to despair. On the contrary, there was

a twitching of his muscles and flashing of his eye, which showed a great struggle of some sort still at work within. This was a favorable sign. He seemed, as near as I could judge at a glance, like a man groping in mystery, and vainly harassing himself for a clue. He did not speak to me at first, but watched me closely, as if he would read my errand in my face. It was certainly not there—at least what he expected—and then he ventured to say, still holding me tight by the hand, “My sister, do you know anything of her?”

“No,” said I, “but I am sure that she is safe, and that no harm has come to her.”

Oh, the heart-thrilling earnestness of the “thank God!” which broke from Vitti as I said this! It made me tremble to think that he really believed me. He kept still looking at me, and squeezing my hand, as if to be certain that he had really heard those words of mine; and then I saw tears begin to gather in his eyes, and then they rolled down his cheeks, and made him keep his hold upon me all the tighter for fear that shower of joy and gratitude might hide me from his sight, and the delicious dream be over.

“Vitti,” said I, again, solemnly, for it was truly a solemn moment, and I felt that the eternal happiness of two lives depended on the answer—“tell me, Vitti, with your own lips, that you are innocent of the crime they charge you with. I do not doubt it, only let me hear it from your own lips.”

In an instant his whole expression changed. The former cloud of terror and doubt rolled away, and he was in expression the same brave, frank, daring boy as ever. “Ha!” said he, “that was spared me. Had any wrong been done by him to my sister, I would have murdered him, and laughed at anything hell could add to my torments. The murdering of a man would have been nothing. No,—I

found him dying—and was with him to the last, calling upon him to tell me of my sister—but he never spoke to me a word. He died, and it was the terrible uncertainty of her fate that was killing me. I could not find it possible to decide on what to do, and I have been in a stupor until now. But now I shall go out and find her. My sister lives—as she did in what seems to me another earlier state of existence—so changed have I become in the last two days; and all the powers of earth cannot prevent our reunion. Come, let us leave this miserable, rotten old place, and go out; there is a whole band of angels in the air above us, to protect us on our way.”

Even as Vitti spoke, in the rapture of the moment, a golden stream of light poured into the room from the west. We rose up, hand in hand, to go forth. As we issued from the house, guarded only by a few superannuated natives in the menial department, the whole world seemed suddenly to have become fresh and new again. Broad patches of blue sky, in one of which was the clear bright sun, now almost setting, gave to the heavens a cheerful aspect above. The broad ocean wore its white caps jauntily in the purified atmosphere—the broader expanse of hill-side and forest, waving with its mass of richest verdure, like another ocean, with mysteries and voices as sublime and solemn as the first, wore every tint of gold and green. The river, with the life upon its bosom, the houses in the vale beneath us, every homeliest object within the circle of our view, each had its own face brighter for the pearly drops which had kissed it. And who in a mood to enjoy it like Vitti? The few words of hope and sympathy which I had spoken, had been to him as a new birth, and he was like a child in his sportive appreciation. We walked towards the ramparts, for we were not quite prepared to venture on a sally forth.

"Last evening," said Vitti, "as I walked here alone, I saw a vision yonder which made me doubt for a moment the soundness of my reason."

He pointed across the water to a point in the vicinity of the small river, which I have heretofore noticed as flowing into the sea hard by where stood our camel encampment.

"All day long," continued he, "the image of my sister had been before me like an actual presence; and as I stood out here, at about this very hour, I saw her still; but now she was afar off, gliding like a spirit along the beach in that direction. It was not strange that I should fancy her there, for it was her old favorite walk. I rubbed my eyes for another look—the vision seemed so real and palpable—but when I looked again, she was gone. Nevertheless, I dreamed of her as still there. But good Heavens! what is that?—I see the same form again!"

I strained my eyes in the direction indicated, and in all the wide reach of the magnificent panorama, which the sun was gilding so gorgeously with his latest rays, I too saw but one figure, and it was certainly that of a woman pacing solitarily along the shore.

"I see it," said I, and although the figure was very indistinct to my eyes, from the great distance, something impelled me to cry out, "and it is she;—yes, Vitti, it *is* your sister!"

"And do you really see it?" said he, in a low and solemn tone. "Oh, God, can it be?"

There was no doubt of it—there was really a slight and graceful figure hovering there—so slight, one might have been pardoned in the strange beauty of the hour for believing it to be a spirit. But I was satisfied. Already a possible interpretation of the whole affair was passing through my mind.

"Vitti," said I, still holding him by the hand, and speak-

ing as calmly as I could, "this serene sky and tranquil earth, rising up out of the ruins of the storm, is a type of what you also are to expect. Leave the arrangement of the thing to me. I shall find your sister, and bring her to you here. You cannot go forth now, but to-night you may. And to-morrow you and your sister may both be safe on board the *Crescent City*. In another land you may be happier than you could ever hope to be in this."

The form of the solitary woman had disappeared from the beach. Vitti, holding my hand like an obedient child, walked back with me to the house. I think at that moment, if an angel had come down from the sky, flapping his white wings about us, he would not have trusted him so implicitly as me.

"Do not be long away," said he, as I left him in his room—no more a prison-house, but the rendezvous where he was soon to meet his soul's twin; and then as I was going down the rickety old stairs, he called me back.

"Stay a moment," said he, with tears pouring down his face; "it is my belief that the sinless have power with God for the pardon of the sinful. Now hear me. There is one angel, though she still lives on earth, who shall be taught both here and hereafter, as by the secret bond of sympathy between us I know how to teach her, to weary Heaven's Majesty for your eternal good. There is no other recompense fitting for a deed of kindness like this. Now go, and take this certainty along with you!"

I went out from the old fort, the grim exponent of man's meaner passions. I recrossed the river, and taking my way along the marginal path I had often travelled before, came to the spot where we had recently encamped. The sun was setting. The broad sea was there like a huge shaggy, but not unfriendly monster, pawing upon the sand, licking it with

its great white lolling tongue, and growling in its deep throat as was its wont. I sat down, for a moment, to rest upon a fragment of a former wreck, and was reviewing in my mind the incidents of the day, when I heard a voice close beside me, but nearer to the stream than where I sat—a voice singing. I needed not to see the form of its owner then, for I knew it well. That voice—that tone of voice—it told its own story; yes, in its uncertain aim, its shrill and unsteady pitch, its sobbing, gasping accompaniment—the oldest of all old stories, a disordered intellect consequent upon blighted love, a story told so touchingly in the history of fair Ophelia and the gentle Bride of Lammermoor—a story that we do not often hear in the busy world, because stifled in the walls of a mad-house, or wasting its echoes in the more sultry and certain seclusion of the grave, but none the less frequently enacting for all that.

I rose up from where I was sitting, and listened; I could make out no words, and know not if this plaintive outpouring of a clouded heart found vent in words; but the sentiment conveyed to my mind thereby I afterwards tried to fix in “a local habitation.”

The following may not suggest to the reader the depth of sorrow which seemed to well up from the singer’s heart, and I give it only as my feeble interpretation of the same:—

SONG.

“Let me go where waves are wildest,
Breaking on a lonesome shore;
Where the winds that erst were mildest,
’Long the solemn beaches roar.
There a sea-bird wild and storm-tost,
Vainly flies the waters o’er;
Here a maid, as lorn and love-lost,
Weepeth, waileth evermore.

“Day by day the waters gather,
And the waves are leaping high;
So in calm and blackest weather,
Still the lone sea-bird must fly.
There’s a brain is mad with fever,
There’s a wild and tear-dimmed eye;
There’s a heart is breaking ever,
And will break—until I die.”

It now occurred to me, that once, having gone back some distance from the beach, on a tramp with the Major, we had come upon the ranche of an old native, who, in the course of our conversation, had mentioned the names of Vitti and his sister; I had forgotten in what connexion. It was probable that Carlotta had been secreted with him during these past few days; but for what? This I was soon to learn.

As she came into view, keeping close by the margin of the stream, and walking towards the sea, I observed in her the same wonderful grace and beauty as ever; but could not help likewise noticing, with the keenest regret, that uncertainty of gait which bespeaks a lack of purpose in the mind; she did not see me till I was quite near to her, and when I uttered her name softly, she sprang back as if stung. Seeing and recognising me, she became quiet, however, and seemed to await the delivery of my message.

“I come from your brother, Mademoiselle,” said I, using the French language.

“Yes,” said she. “He is well?”

“Hardly,” said I; “he has missed you for a few days, and suffers much anxiety on that account. Will you return with me to him?”

“Is he alone?” inquired she, with a very strange, unnatural calmness of tone.

A new idea broke upon me. “He is,” said I. “The French Marquis de G——”

"Well."

"The Marquis left Chagres some three days ago."

"Well."

"And is since dead at Dos Hermanas."

"Dead," said the girl, repeating the word slowly several times, as if trying to comprehend its meaning. "Dead—dead—dead and buried?"

"Dead and buried," said I.

All at once a twinkling ray of reason, like the first star of evening, shot up into her eyes, and she repeated the words more anxiously, "dead and buried."

"Dead and buried," said I again, and watched her closely all the while. She did not weep, as the real truth came gradually to her mind; she did not show signs of fear or sorrow, but a quiet sentiment of peace and satisfaction seemed to be settling down upon her, and her countenance changed, even as had her brother's, when I assured him that she still lived.

"And so," said she, eagerly, almost gladly, as it seemed, "the Marquis is dead—gone away to be with the spirits, in the spirit world—is this so?"

"It is," said I. "I have seen his grave."

"Oh, for this," cried she, "may God be praised! No matter how he died—he is happy—he is with the blest. Now I shall not be mad any longer. Now I shall love him, and it will not make me mad. Now I shall love him, and no earth-stain shall ever come upon our love, to blast it. Now I shall love him for ever, and shall not be an outcast for it. See here, sir, you are married, and live in the sanctity of domestic life, and know not from what a chasm I am saved. I loved this man, when something told me that to have declared my love would have been my ruin, and brought tears and wretchedness to all who love me. And this was

making me mad. There was no safety but in flight; and yet I seemed to be flying from my duty to poor Angelo, but God knows I could not help it. Had it been otherwise, we had perished together. Now my love is in heaven; no blighting curse of earth can reach it. Forgive me what seems unworthy in this confession; could you see me as I now see myself, I am sure you would. And now tell me of Angelo, for I will at once go with you to him. Oh, strange, joyful transformation; he is dearer to me than ever."

"But, Mademoiselle, your brother is in the fort."

"Ha!"—

"Arrested on suspicion of the murder of the Marquis."

"Good God! from what are we saved!"

"Even so, Mademoiselle"—

"And if I had yielded, this supposition had been correct."

"Then you believe in Angelo's innocence?"

Her look, her triumphant smile, was the same as that with which her brother had thrown the charge from him. She saw the accusation only in its absurdity.

"My brother a murderer, and without a certain cause! You little know him! Many a hasty blow has he given, but never a mortal one; many a life has he saved, and many a generous deed has he done; nothing mean or cowardly can ever come from him!"

And yet, thought I to myself, in hot blood such a thing might happen, although the fond eyes of a sister's love could see no such possibility.

We at once set off on our return to the town, picking our way along the narrow path leading through the wood, for the twilight is of short duration in those latitudes, and it was now quite dark. I explained to Carlotta more fully the position of Vittì, and the necessity for his immediate release.

Upon one thing we were perfectly agreed, that the snake-tamer, whose name turned out to be Lowry, was the author of the murder, if such had been committed; a belief in which I was greatly strengthened, upon learning the fact that the Marquis bore about his person effects of great value.

It is a principle in law that a man is not bound to criminate himself, and I do not see why a writer should not have the privilege of putting in a like exemption plea, when he is liable to be placed in a ludicrous or undignified position; otherwise I might feel bound to relate a small mishap which occurred to myself just as we were on the point of entering the fort, and prevented my being present at the reunion of Vitti and his sister, and was attended likewise with sundry other unpleasant consequences. I might define it as consisting of a slide, while groping a little in advance of my companion, through the "storm and darkness" which had succeeded to our late golden burst of sunshine, and its silvery wake of star-light, from the same break in the precipitous bank that had brought Sampson Vale's adventure to so abrupt a termination. I might go on to tell how I was not equally fortunate with that chivalric gentleman, but went tearing through the bushes and bumping against the sharp rocky edges in my descent, till I finally was brought up by the loose round rocks at the very bottom of the bluff. How I lay there insensible, I have no means of knowing for what length of time, till the rising tide, lashing my temples, restored the brain to action, and made it cognizant of my physical state. How I then essayed to stir, and did succeed in creeping a little at long intervals towards where, the occasional, for the storm of rain and thunder raged unabated, flashes of lightning showed me was the native town. Suffering greatly from bodily pain, though evidently whole as yet in limb,

how I was all that night in the same situation, and did not touch the welcome mud of the old town till the sun, who seemed on that morning to have come up for me alone, sent his advance beams over the vapory hills before me, and made the growling storm retreat before him, and yet, how during the long hours—I am proud to be able to write this—my thoughts were not wholly of my weary self, but left me often and went up to that decaying house, where two noble and loving hearts had that night met, as I could not but feel in a great measure through my means, and revelled in the infinite joy of that reunion; how they went often further still, and were with those dear ones, quiet and snug in the saloons of the *Falcon*, cleaving the rough waves of the Caribbean. What was bodily suffering to me then? All this and much more I might relate, but, as I have already said, I do not see why a writer should be held, even though he profess in all his narratives to keep nothing back from his dear friend, the reader, to place himself in a comic pillory from which he may not find it easy to descend, and I feel quite sure that that friend would not exact it merely for his momentary gratification.

Be it enough, then, for me to say that a very early hour of that morning beheld me on the quarter-deck of the *Ralph Rivas*, fortified with a good breakfast, and smoking a genuine “*habaguana*” in perfect peace and quietude of mind. This mental condition will be understood when I add, that I had received, but a moment before starting, a most affectionate letter from Vitti, expressing great solicitude as to my condition—confound him!—after my mishap of the previous night, and informing me of the safe arrival of himself and sister on board the steamship “*Crescent City*.”

CHAPTER XVI.

AN OFFICIAL DISCLOSURE.

“O’ER the glad waters of the dark blue sea,” borne onward by her swift-revolving wheels, as if they were truly the broad wings of the steam-god, goes the home-bound Falcon with her precious freight. Up along the still surface of the sultry river, with its thick-laid hem of deepest verdure, we take again our toilsome way. Dos Hermanas is behind us; and so, before the day is over—another such day as our first upon the river, but varied with new sights and wonders of winged forms and “bloom and greenery”—is Vamos Vamos, Peña Blanca, Bajio Soldado, Aqua Salud, Barro Colorado, and perhaps other places of less note in history, whose names I do not now remember; and a little after sundown we arrive at the village of Palenquilla, a point on the river some fifteen or eighteen miles above Dos Hermanas. This is a genuine stopping-place; and one would think, from the sights and sounds along its water line, that the very same crowd of the unterrified whom we had left at Gatun, two nights previous, were here assembled, so similar are all these crowds in their general features. But Palenquilla of itself is not Gatun—not exactly. There are not so many native huts, but there are *two* American hotels; and on the night of our arrival there were several tents pitched, and fires built, and lanterns lit, up and down its long sloping banks; and in the clear but feeble star-light, one might easily have taken it for

a great rendezvous of the gipsies, tinkers, and all the strolling spirits of this restless world.

It is a theory of certain modern naturalists, that the distribution of rain over the American continents, owing to their form and situation in mid ocean, is far greater, on an average, than on the continents of the Old World; that, in consequence of this extraordinary humidity, the vegetable kingdom flourishes to a degree unknown elsewhere, while the animal is proportionally diminutive and feeble. Thus the alligator is a lesser representative of the crocodile of the Nile; the puma of the African lion; the lama of the camel. Nowhere is one more struck with the truth of this theory, applicable, at all events, to the lower latitudes, than while journeying on the river Chagres. Here, during an eternal summer, bloom and wither such immense varieties of the vegetable world, that the unpractised eye is wearied in its attempt to select the parts of the wondrous whole, which seems to have no beginning and no end, but to roll on like the ocean,

“Dark-heaving, boundless, endless, and sublime;”

and whether swayed by the gale, or clashing beneath the thunder-bolt, or murmuring gratefully to the gentle lappings of the summer wind, is equally “a glorious mirror where the Almighty’s form” is seen. And here, too, beneath the shade of these majestic monarchs of the wood, the mango, the sycamore, and palm, man, the highest style of the animal, crawls languidly upon the bosom of his mother earth, unmindful, as it seems, of his glorious destiny, “content to share a coward life with venomous insects and the beasts of the jungle.” Such, at any rate, has been heretofore the character of these wretched natives. Whether, with the infusion of new blood amongst them, there shall come more

subtleness to their brains, or quicksilver to their joints, remains to be seen.

I had passed a sluggishly pleasant day, not unmarked by certain quiet and rather humorous incidents. We had plenty of company in other boats on the river, and plenty of droll rencontres at the native ranches on its banks. These gold-seekers were, in one respect, like the full-fed priests we read about, who, while they live in shadowy hopes of the spiritual enjoyments of another world, are by no means disdainful of the corporeal pleasures of this, and seemed bent on having their full share of the passing fun. But it was more the calm delight of finding myself surrounded by my quondam friends, and losing, as it were, my weary identity in the thorough appreciation of their rough, frank, genial, or enthusiastic natures, that made me so sluggishly calm and cheerful. It is truly a glorious privilege that we possess of being able, at times, when the realities of our own one life seem to press hard upon us, to throw ourselves, so to speak, into the arms of happier or more buoyant natures, and live a little while in their lives. We are sad from solitary broodings; and so long as no light comes to us from without, the image of the world on our dull brain is hung with gloomy curtains. But let us break away from ourselves, and go into the thronged street, and how often is it that a face, radiant with innocence, hope, and joy, shall beam upon us, there dissipating, by its brightness, our gloomy fancies, and kindling, as with a torch, a ruddy fire at the hearthside of our musings. I have thought that even the criminal on the scaffold, catching sight of some childish, happy expression in the crowd below, might not feel himself so very forlorn, trusting, perhaps vaguely, that the long madness of his soul might yet be over; and, in the far eternity of revolving events, he might possibly get back to some stand-point whence he should look upon

creation with a cooler, healthier brain. If, as has been asserted by certain modern statesmen, there is a community in mankind's destiny, politically speaking, there is certainly no less, so far as his moral and social happiness is concerned. But, heigh-ho ! where are we getting to ? What has all this transcendentalism to do with the Isthmus ?

The Major—I have him now before me as he was during all that day ; his fine eye catching every object and form of beauty, and flashing with sincerest inward pleasure, while his words of flame darted into our hearts. His was a mind that had kept great company ; and from its well stored depths the choicest passages of the old poets came bubbling up always at the right moment. He had the soul of a child—hopeful and enthusiastic. He was a companion to go round the world with, and make one wish at the end that the voyage had been twice as long.

As for Tom, the shakes being off, he was occupied principally in taking minute doses of quinine, in draughts of a dark-colored liquid, which Colonel Allen poured out of a four gallon demijohn at frequent intervals, and which smelt strongly of rum and burnt molasses, but which Monsieur Crapolet affirmed was brown sherry. The Colonel and Monsieur Crapolet likewise partook of the same beverage quite often, diluted of course with a little river water, although the Colonel seemed to cast a certain imputation upon the wine, derogatory to its quality, by observing with a shrug of his shoulders, and a slight tremor in his entire frame, immediately subsequent to a heavy dose, that “the subscriber was constitutionally opposed to bad liquor.” I noticed that Judge Smithers excused himself from partaking by an insinuation that there was too much of the monkey about it, but I am inclined to think that he made use of the term “monkey” in this connexion as a mere figure of speech.

"Speaking of fever," said Judge Smithers—"I say, Allen, are you ever troubled nowadays with your old complaint of typhoid?"

"No," said the subscriber, briefly.

"I mean," pursued the Judge, "the periodical attack which you were subject to while in the State House, at Jefferson City."

"The State House story!" cried we all.

"It's not much of a story," said Colonel Allen.

"But very characteristic," said the Judge.

"Debouchez!" said Monsieur Crapolet, with a gesture, expressive of thirsty impatience, thinking probably, that if we had got to have the story, the sooner it was begun the better.

"Is it to be a true story?" inquired Tom.

"Yes," replied the Judge, "this is one of Allen's true stories."

"As if the subscriber ever told any that were not," observed the Colonel, waggishly.

"As if," continued the Judge, following him up, and using a horse phrase, "an editor ever shied at the truth."

"Debouchez!" shouted Monsieur Crapolet again.

"Well, then, gentlemen," began the Colonel, "but really it is nothing of a story—you see the subscriber was once appointed to an office, in the State House, at Jefferson City."

"Governor?" inquired Tom.

"No," said the Colonel, "but it's nothing of a story—Judge, I would much rather you would tell it."

"Hey, g'long there, what are you 'bout?" said the Judge, with the air of a man taking a bluebottle from the nigh leader's ear.

"Well, then," began the Colonel again; "the subscriber had an office in the State House, under the Governor—a very

respectable office, which he was induced to accept to accommodate his friends and the public."

"The Colonel is always ready to sacrifice himself for the good of his friends," observed the Judge, in explanation.

"To illustrate which the aforesaid will have the pleasure of potating with his fellow voyager, Monsieur Crapolet," said the Colonel, thereby drawing our attention to the unhappy Frenchman, who sat gazing gloomily at the water alongside, as if it were a very dismal subject for contemplation.

"The State House story!" cried we all again, as soon as the potations were well over—not at all disposed to relinquish *our* treat.

"It's no story any way," persisted Allen, "the amount of it is—the subscriber was once in the State House at Jefferson City, employed there, you understand, in a very respectable though slightly subordinate capacity, a thing he was induced to consent to by the importunities of his numerous friends, and being there, you see—with great pleasure."

The last observation was addressed to Monsieur Crapolet, who had caught the Colonel's eye, and was going through certain pantomimics, intended in a delicate way to suggest to him, the Colonel, the propriety of taking some refreshment in the way of drink before proceeding with his narrative.

"It's no use," said Judge Smithers, hopelessly, as the Colonel accepted a generous quencher, "I see that I shall have to tell the story myself. Previous to Allen's acceptance of the office of clerk to the Secretary of State at Jefferson City, he held an equally subordinate office in the printing-house of the American Bald Eagle and Poor Devil's Advocate at St. Louis, namely that of items and bill collector. It has been suspected that the numerous little difficulties therein recorded of a certain gentleman well known in our

midst, were no other than the romantic doings of the Colonel himself about town. Under the inspiration of his pen the city became quite another place from what it ever was before, or ever will be again."

"Fact," murmured Allen, admiringly.

"But," continued the Judge, "it was in his capacity of bill collector, that the Colonel shone with especial brilliancy. Soon after the first of January it was the custom of the proprietors to send the Colonel forth——"

"From the Eden of the sanctum," observed Allen, parenthetically.

"To meet the smiles and frowns of a heartless world—armed with a pile of bills, a description of weapon not usually of much avail in captivating the affections of men. Now, whatever was the result of these adventurous sallies to the aforesaid proprietors, one thing is certain, that the Colonel fattened upon them. The fact is when he didn't get money, he got a drink—and not unfrequently got very drunk."

"He's cool," said Allen, who happened at the time to be hob-nobbing with Monsieur Crapolet, and whose complexion did not bespeak any great degree of coolness in his corporeal system at all events.

"To relinquish a post like this," continued the Judge, "went sorely against the Colonel's grain. But, however, he did it."

"He did it," groaned Allen.

"In his new situation he didn't get many punches."

"Meaning the mixture—so called," interpreted Allen.

"And yet strange to say, this abstemious course of life did not seem to agree with the Colonel's constitution, for during his continuance at the State House he was troubled with a periodical attack of fever, which was sure to befall him soon after the first of January."

"Always on the memorable eighth."

"And which made it invariably necessary for him to return home. It was a little curious how this fever affected him. He was quite thin and sick on leaving Jefferson City, looking in part as if he had dieted—and his enemies actually affirmed that such was the case—on rhubarb for a week previous. But when he came back after an absence of a few weeks only, he was robust and healthy-looking—not to say, red even in the face, as if he had during all this time lived upon nothing but brandy and water and hot punches, which his enemies likewise accused him of. For two years the secretary submitted to this misfortune of Allen's without a word of complaint."

"Parbleu!" observed Monsieur Crapolet, shrugging his shoulders, as much as to inquire what the dragon he could say.

"About the first of January of the third year, Allen's health began to fail again. He observed to the Secretary that he must go home, that he could not somehow support the climate of Jefferson City for a longer period than ten or eleven months. It was very strange, but there it was—

"'But,' suggested the Secretary, 'it is stranger still that you should always return, looking so well.'

"'The subscriber is exceedingly afraid this time that he'll never recover his health sufficiently to come back at all,' returned Allen.

"So when the eighth arrived, Allen having previously informed the Secretary that he had a presentiment that he should not live the night out if he remained over that day, took his departure for St. Louis. After he had been gone a week, the Secretary, 'smelling a rat' perhaps, thought he would send an embassy to inquire after his health and report progress. Well, they arrived—there were two of them—at Allen's hotel at St. Louis, and inquired how the Colonel was. The

barkeeper informed them that the individual in question was a leetle under the weather about dinner-time, but would not probably be sick enough to retire to bed before night.

“He is able to sit up, then, a portion of the day?” inquired they.

“Well, he stands it as long as he can,” was the reply.

“We are from Jefferson City,” said they, ‘and learnt of his sickness at that place.’

“The Colonel is a case,” was the somewhat figurative response.”

“Ticket was the word,” interposed Allen.

“Well, they finally asked if they could see him, and were requested, in reply, to hold on a bit, and they’d see and hear him, too, to their entire satisfaction. It was not long before our hero was set down at the door, and came in with the roll of the hack still upon him, shouting in a thick and sonorous tone of voice, that ‘all the world was a stage-coach, and all the men, women, and band-boxes merely passengers therein.’”

“The Judge has got that part correct, any Low,” said Allen with a wink.

“The embassy rubbed their eyes, but it was no ghost whom they beheld; neither did the man look sick, at least not according to the common acceptation of the word, so they ventured to call him by name. ‘Ha!’ said the Colonel, on recognising his old companions at Jefferson City, and little suspecting their errand, ‘you have arrived at the very moment. I am to have a bit of a supper directly, with a few friends. You see I have been out all day on a collecting tour, and not having been very successful in filling my pockets with rocks, am not exactly in good ballast-trim. As William says :—

“What, not one hit
From Tripoli, from Mexico, and England,
From Lisbon, Barbary, and India,
And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch
Of merchant-marring rocks!”

“Here was a case for you!”

“Quite a subject for Hogarth,” said Allen.

“But to conclude. The embassy accepted the polite invitation; Allen, to give the devil his due—without any figure of speech—gave them a handsome repast. Towards the small hours, the Colonel was somehow got to bed; and the next morning our diplomats, completely won over to the enemy, were on their way back to Jefferson City.

“‘Well,’ said the Secretary to them on their return, with a knowing look, ‘how did you find Allen;—pretty sick, eh?’

“‘He was indeed,’ said they, solemnly.

“‘Have a doctor?’ inquired the Secretary.

“‘There were two physicians in attendance,’ replied the embassy (which was true, for among the Colonel’s guests were two knights of the lancet).

“‘Able to sit up?’ persisted the Secretary.

“‘Well, hardly,’ was the reply. ‘We left St. Louis at noon, and he had not been able to rise at that hour.’

“The Secretary appeared to be satisfied, and nothing further was said at the time. But the cream of the matter was, that the Secretary had slipped out to St. Louis, immediately after the departure of his friends, and had been present with them at the hotel in a kind of incog., and was of course aware of the entire transaction. The Dutch-uncleism of the Colonel, in rather avoiding a strictly veracious account of his sufferings, on his return to Jefferson City, was really delightful. The joke, however, was never fully acknowledged in public until on a certain

occasion, when our four characters happened to be indulging together, the Secretary, in an unguarded moment, observed to the barkeeper, that he would take a small dash of 'Typhoid' in his. An explanation followed, and the result was another supper at the Colonel's expense, where the subject was fully discussed, and pronounced highly discreditable to Missouri politics. Now, Allen, you rascal, don't you feel ashamed of yourself?"

"I trust," said the Colonel, with a penitent air, "that the thing may be set down as among the foibles of youth, and on no account be allowed to go any further."

"Of course not!" said we all.

CHAPTER XVII.

SCENE AT PALENQUILLA.

IT is an old habit of mine—so old as to be almost a second nature—that of prying beneath the outer surface of things, after a concealed mystery; of getting, as it were, behind the scenes in every act of life that I thought particularly worthy of my attention, that I might learn something of the motives which led to such greatness or glitter; that I might weigh calmly these palpable results in my mind, and decide for myself how much was real, and how much false; how often the heart was in the action, or in the most melancholy and perverse opposition. And especially in visiting a new place, have I been wont to seek for something not written plainly on its front—something of its inner life, something characteristic of the spot, that should set its mark upon it in my memory, and make it unlike all other places to me; something which, when its name was mentioned, should instantly start up before me, the one bold figure of the picture, to which the surrounding objects should form a shadowy back-ground. But in this I have not always been successful. I have spent days in certain spots, watching long and wearily for a glimpse of that subtle revelation, as one sits sometimes beside a great painting, striving, oh, how vainly! to catch something of the inspiration of him who conceived and executed it, in the glow of which presence all its most delicate beauties should

start forth ; and yet have gone away, and not having felt and grown, as it were, with and into them, have soon forgotten them altogether. And at other times my nature has so mingled itself with the deep earnestness of the scene, that I never—never can forget it.

It was a stormy evening ; the rain fell in merciless torrents. Among the thick forests on the opposite bank it plunged with a heavy crashing sound. The yellow streams rushed in foaming impetuosity down the sloping hill-side of Palenquilla, and gave a fresh impulse to the already maddened current of the river. It was no easy task to keep a footing in the ascent leading to the hotel farthest from our barge, for while the wind did its best to overthrow you, the running water and the slippery soil under foot contributed equally to the difficulties of locomotion. Nevertheless, prompted by something which, for lack of a better term, you may call curiosity, I was bent on reaching that edifice ; and as sleep in our barge, owing to the social peculiarities of our neighbors, was out of the question, had quite made up my mind, if I did succeed in reaching it, to pass the night there. Sleep—yes, to court that—not rest, but sleep—was to be the end of my toilsome journey, as I thought. Sleep—I did not find it there, but there was one who did ; one who closed his little eyes for ever on the weary world that night, and was with the angels when he awoke.

Ugh ! I have stumbled over something, but 'tis nothing but a pig : it might have been something worse ; yes, and it might have been something a good deal better, a log for instance, and then its squealing wouldn't have awakened such a deafening chorus from the dogs, who ought to keep perfectly quiet or be simply whining on a night like this. And ugh ! again, for mishaps never come singly ; it is my head I have hit this time, against a beam lying on the top

of posts, which may be part of the skeleton of an awning to some building which was to have been erected, for all that I ever found out to the contrary. Those big lanterns are not such ridiculous affairs after all. But here we are—this is the hotel.

Somehow, it is not a hotel suggestive of a cosy night. There is, so to speak, a lack of those substantial, home-like, thoroughly comfortable features which are associated in our minds with the idea of a model hotel. There is no great wide door, opening into a broad well-lighted hall, with a winding staircase leading to other stories, where are snug chambers with the anthracite throwing a kindly glow upon the soft carpet, and neat furniture, and snowy counterpane of the bed. There is no parlor where the ladies have assembled for a hop; no other parlor where grey-headed men sit gazing at the coal fire, with the morning or evening newspaper upon their knees, and indulge in reminiscences of the last war; observing that when the news of peace arrived it was a sloppy night, very much such a night as this, in fact. There is no snuggery known as the bar-room, reeking with odors of tobacco, lemon peel, and fragrant old Jamaica, where young men in plaid trowsers, many-pocketed coats, flat-brimmed hats, and neckcloths with square ends, sit and smoke and drink, and smoke and drink again. There is no full-fed, ruddy-visaged landlord, whom you soon get to know by the familiar name of "old Peter," to bid you welcome with as much cordiality, and order John's attention to your luggage with as much satisfaction, as if he had been expecting you for a month, and felt really very much relieved that you had at last arrived. But then it is such a hotel as one would expect, knowing that it was originally a native ranche, and that the main building, wings, and similar extensive additions which were to have been made to it,

were not yet begun. It has one room, which must be some twelve feet square, lighted by a tallow candle on the usual board, a notched pole leading to the attic, the customary furniture in the way of boxes and logs, a ground floor it is true, but only partially appropriated by the puddles. It seems to be taking care of itself, for no one takes any notice of me as I enter, and indeed there is no one inside to do so; and to get in at all I am obliged to remove the arm of a gentleman who is barricading the door, and who is very sallow, thin, and shaky, but habited in white pantaloons and a black dress coat, and looking like a man who had put on the last remnants of his bravery to die. I observed jovially to this gentleman that it is great weather, and think that I made an allusion to "young ducks" in the same connexion; but he is past taking any notice of such trifling, or of anything else as to that, although he afterwards turns out to be the proprietor of the place. When this truth comes home to me, I propose taking a glass of brandy and water. He answers me, "There's brandy," without making any sign to show where, or indeed looking in any direction at all, so that I am under the necessity of hunting it up myself. The ring of the dime upon the board in payment is equally powerless to arouse him,—from what? perhaps from a vision of scenes and faces far enough away. I next propose, but this time to myself, retiring for the night, and, scraping the mud from my boots as far as practicable, and assuring myself of the steadiness of the stick in advance, take my way to the attic.

I must have been very tired and sleepy, for I can only recollect one moment when the cracking of the cane floor beneath my step chimed in beautifully with the pattering of the heavy rain-drops on the roof, and I think slumber seized me even as I settled down upon my primitive couch. I had

hardly lost myself, as the expression is, when I was again roused to consciousness by voices in the apartment below. The first was that of a woman, low and shrill, impressing me as coming from a heart in bitterest warfare with its destiny, and curiously at variance with the lulling sound of the rain, and the dull, heavy, mournful gustiness of the wind.

"Oh, John," it cried in tones of agony, "do not let him die, he is my little angel! John, oh, I cannot let him die!"

"Hush, dear," said another voice, the rough hard voice of a man; "why should we ask to have him spared? Has our life been so very pleasant that we should pray for a like boon for *him*?"

The words, and the tone in which they were uttered more than the words themselves, revealed to me a picture, suddenly illuminated as it were by a flash of Heaven's lightning, in which I noted all the details of one of those unhappy lives so commonly led by the sensitive and poor. It was with no hope of turning back the tide of hurrying events, and yet certainly with no idle curiosity, that I crept along over the cane floor of my chamber towards the aperture, where I could leisurely inspect the scene below. Oh, what would I not have given for the power and appliances of the painter, to have stamped its lineaments upon the canvas, even as I saw them there! A man and woman had entered, and were seated side by side on two rude boxes, stationed in a corner of the apartment, which was possibly the most comfortable locale, if such an epithet may be applied to premises so utterly wet and cheerless. These two persons seemed in full possession of the house. The proprietor had either gone out, or was coiled away to sleep in some corner hidden to my view. A second glance revealed a third person, a child of apparently not more than five or six summers, whose

emaciated and spasmodic frame was almost wholly concealed by the protecting arms of the man, evidently his father. This group of three was so disposed, with the feeble candle-light falling full upon them, that, in my desire to read their story in their faces, I almost immediately saw their each minutest line, while all the world beside became nothing but the blackest void, and my ear ceased to take note of the rain and gusty wind, and heard nothing but the outpourings of these forlorn and seemingly forgotten spirits.

The man was apparently rather under what is termed the middle age, of small stature, wasted and thin, as if from long care and self-denial. His attire, even in the abandon of that out-of-the-way spot, somehow bespoke the gentleman, and just as plainly, too, the *poor* gentleman. As he sat holding his frail burden, every moment, alas! becoming frailer, vainly trying to soothe it to a moment's repose, and after each unsuccessful effort turning his beseeching eyes to heaven, I could read in his sharp pale face, his high projecting, but not broad forehead, his quick restless eye, flashing with a certain fire withal, and the unsteady working of his mouth, the plainly written story of a high-hearted disappointed man. There was something in his whole demeanor which bespoke the man of pride, of principle, of genius too, but also of irresolution—the most unhappy type of all God's images on earth; the man who, seeing the prizes with which life's lottery is teeming, and knowing the way to reach them, yet lacks the nerve to follow therein, because the cowardly doubt is still there, as to whether, after all, the highest good is thus to be obtained.

The woman, like the man, in one respect at least, was “not now that which she had been,” and yet there were traces of her former better self flickering occasionally in her face and mien. Although no smile played upon her lips, which

were once beautiful, but were now thin and drawn tightly together, as if to shut out from her heart the atmosphere of a world that had never seemed to love her, and no especial brilliance flashed upon you when the lids were raised from eyes around which were drawn dark lines, and which stood out in painful prominence from wasted cheeks ; and although her costume was of the simplest, suggestive of a dull routine of daily tasks, and nothing of the dashiness and bravery of life, yet there was something, not exactly visible to the outward eye, which showed that this was not the destiny to which she was born ; else why should I have seen her, as in the mirror of the past, sweeping with gallant grace adown a gilded drawing-room, or rousing to wild gaiety a sea-shore or hearth-side party, by looks and tones fraught with fire-like electric sparks ? Even now, in that worn, slender, compressed frame, there was secreted a possibility of fascination, which needed only the showers and beams of sympathizing hearts to awaken to active being. Ye rude ones of the world, ye who take pride in the scrupulous correctness of your dealings in your business relations with other men, paying promptly your pecuniary debts even to the uttermost farthing, but who, in the calculating and unfeeling pursuit of your selfish ends, jostle the pure, the gentle, and the uncomplaining from *their* paths of life, depriving them thus of those simple pleasures which you know not of, because you cannot enjoy them ; think you that you will never be called to a reckoning for this ?

And the little child, who was overleaping all this weariness and misery of life, and was soon to be a little cherub—I actually found myself chuckling over the idea that he was cheating the old deceptive villain of a world, and was eluding its clutches even by a stolen march to heaven. No frittering away of the beauty and glory of *his* young life by

unmanly, cankering cares. The lustre of his roguish little eye was not to be dimmed, the rosy fulness of his mischievous mouth was not to be wholly wasted, his laughing curls were not even to be cut, till he had lain them all in the bosom of the rotting earth which was their mother. I have said that he was a child of some five or six summers. There was none of the frostiness of winter about him; nothing even in his form, worn by disease, suggestive of cold or barrenness. He was a delicate summer flower, and now that he was being crushed to earth, it was a summer storm that did it; a rude gale, that might break his fragile stalk, and scatter far and wide his fair frail petals, but which would none the less certainly waft the essence of his fragrance and loveliness far beyond the clouds.

The father sat with the child in his arms, not with any hope of keeping him from the grasp of death, but gently rocking him, as if trying to lull him off to slumber, as he had often perchance done after frolicsome days, when sleep came with a soft and welcome tread, bringing pleasant dreams and angel-whispers in her train. Then the sweet vision of the morrow awakening danced before the father's brain, and *now*——

The mother sat by his side, with her hands clenched, firmly knit together. She was trying to feel physically the agony of sitting helpless there, while her child died. She could not bring herself to feel it, and so she kept rising up, looking wildly round, but, seeing no succor in any quarter, would settle into her seat again with an agonizing groan.

"Oh, John," she would gasp out at times, "tell me, will he live, will he be better soon, will he know his dear mother again? God forgive me, but I cannot—oh no, indeed, I cannot let him die!"

And then again :

"Oh, why is it, why *must* it be so? When we left everything else, and our other children behind us, we could not leave little Charlie. He was to have been our good angel, to make every hardship light and pleasant. Tell me, John, if there is any meaning in this blow."

"It is the penalty we pay for being poor," answered the man bitterly.

A dark shadow, as of remorse, settled suddenly down upon the woman's brow, as she continued wildly:

"But I thought it was enough when we buried little Arthur; you said God had taken him, and it was better for him and us. But Charlie, he has been longer with us, and he is different from all the others; we can never love anything again as we have loved him. Oh, see him now; see his little limbs how they twine. O God, do not let him suffer thus! take him, if thou must, but do not let him linger thus!"

And the father answered solemnly, while the child's limbs were stiff and bent in a last convulsion, and the old look of life was fading away in his upturned eyes, and great drops of agonizing sweat stood upon his little brow, and while greater drops came upon the father's face—a face whose every line spoke a voiceless prayer to God to shorten the death struggle—thus he answered:

"Yes, Mary, this suffering is very hard, almost *too* hard; but hear me, Mary, and thank God with me that our Charlie shall never know a suffering ten thousand times greater than this, which you and I could not have seen and felt for!"

"He does not suffer," said another voice close by. "Even now, your child Charlie rejoices with the angels in the paradise of God."

As the voice spoke, the painful gurgling ceased in the

child's throat, his limbs gradually straightened and resumed their native grace, while a lovely radiance illumined his beautiful countenance, as if it had caught a reflex from the happy spirit hovering there a short moment to bid adieu to its late tenement of clay. A peaceful, easy drawing of a breath or two, and the last chapter of this little life on earth was closed.

There was silence for some minutes. The rain was over, the winds were at rest, and a broad square of moonlight came in through the doorway of the ranche, lighting up the spot where sat the figures of the scene.

It was only natural that the last comer should have been Arthur Orrington. It was particularly fitting that he should have come at that moment—I had no curious sensation how or whence—to form as it were a connecting, reconciling link between those afflicted spirits and the higher order of existences, of which their child was now one. And when, taking a hand of each within his own, he knelt before them in prayer, I could not help feeling indeed that something of the spirit of Him who, coming down from heaven, took upon himself the likeness even of us, and “went about doing good,” yet lingered in the form of our humanity.

His prayer was no idle expenditure of words. It rose up from his soul like spiritual incense: and as it ascended, a like incense from other souls mingled and rose with it, an acceptable offering at the throne of the All-perfect. Oh, what an odor of tearful joy, and gratitude, and hope seemed to float upward and outward from our hearts, making the atmosphere about us redolent of all pleasant things, when that clear, soft, solemn voice repeated the words of our Saviour, “Suffer little children to come unto me;” and then the ineffable peace and faith which overcame us, how can I describe it, when there followed the blessed assurance, that

“of such was the kingdom of heaven !” But when, for the first time, the absolute certainty of their child’s eternal bliss broke upon the parents’ brain ; when, following the spirit of the prayer, they saw him sitting with the white-robed cherubs at the feet of Christ, and knew that there should be his home for ever, the measure of their thankfulness was full. The great glory of the thought, that while they were going about in quest of the treasures of earth, other hands than those of men had been gathering treasures for them, worth more than all the worlds of space, and laying them up in those regions “where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal,” was enough. The corpse of the child lying in its last composure, as if fanned to slumber by an angel’s wing, was but typical of the perfect peace and gladness of those two spirits bowed and silent in the presence of that sublime revelation.

It was long after the departure of Arthur Orrington, ere a word was spoken on either side. The man and woman sat in their respective seats, almost motionless, while the former still held in his arms his still precious burden. At length a loud, long sob burst from the woman, and as she turned her face full towards me, catching meanwhile upon her husband’s arm, I saw lines of tears streaming down her cheek.

“John,” said she, in a tone most thrillingly sad, yet earnest, “I feel that I have done a great wrong, but God has forgiven me ; can you forgive me also ?”

The man changed not his posture in the slightest, and she continued :

“When you were in trouble, John, when the world grew dark around you, when you hadn’t a friend, John, because you hadn’t money, but when a little money would have made you free and happy, I had it and kept it back from you.”

The man turned upon her a countenance full of emotion, but in which was no sentiment of anger.

“Yes, John, I had money, money inherited from a relative, that you did not know of—and I kept it back. But oh! believe me, I did not keep it from avarice or mistrust; I kept it because I would have been too wise, and was a fool.”

In the man’s countenance was an expression of earnest, searching inquiry, which the woman interpreting, went on:

“Yes, John, I saw you suffer day by day; I saw your sensitive spirit goaded and made miserable; I saw you despised by mean, unworthy men, and I kept back the money which might have made you independent of them all. But oh! John, I did not keep it back for myself, I kept it back for *him*; yes, for *him*, that I might have it to keep off the evil of his dark day. Oh! I thought it would come as yours had come, when he was a handsome, high-hearted young man, and I could not bear to think of him crushed and disappointed, and despised of his companions. So I said, I will save it for him, and when his dark day comes, and he shall say to me, ‘Mother, I have no friends, and no position in the world, and I must die,’ then I would bring it forth and give it to him, and be repaid by his kisses and his tears for all that you and I have suffered. Oh, what a fool I was!”

The woman’s tears fell in gushing rivers, but her sobs were less wild and violent. The man wept too, but calmly; and taking her by the hand, he said, in a voice so touchingly tender and sad that I found my own tears falling likewise:

“You are my own dearest Mary. I love you better, ten thousand times better than ever. Let us thank God together that Charlie’s dark day has come and gone; he will

never, never see another, never another shadow through all eternity !”

“But, John, it was wrong to let you suffer as I did, and wrong to wish to thwart the providence of God, and keep my idol from his share of the world’s sorrow. Let us try to understand this lesson. Let us go back to those who are left to us. We shall have enough to begin life with somewhere, and we will live together, all of us. There is certainly a place for us somewhere in the world, and no matter how humbly we live. It seems to me that there cannot be any poverty or hardship left, now Charlie is dead. Dear Charlie, he left us nothing but his dear, sweet memory, and yet how rich are we in the love which he has already sent down to us from heaven ! Let us go back, John, to where our home was, and not care for such wealth as gold any more.”

“Be it so,” said the man ; and he bowed his head and imprinted a passionate kiss upon the pale forehead of his dead child, as if the little one, whose every word and act had been lovely and endearing during life, had taught a yet lovelier lesson by his death.

Afterwards, when a native woman came in, and, removing the corpse tenderly from the father’s arms, laid it upon the counter, and proceeded to wash its face and smoothe down its tumbled locks, but did not remove its clothes, for the mother by signs and looks forbade, thus leading me to think that it was a favorite suit, perchance the very one which he wore to church, hand in hand with his proud parents—proud of *him*—humble enough in so much else—on the last Sabbath of their sojourn in their native land—the fact of her appearance, I say, was somehow associated in my mind with the idea of Arthur Orrington, as if he had sent her to do this. Calmly as she performed her delicate task, and tearlessly as, having prepared the body even for burial, she

threw over it a fragment of a cotton robe bound with a deep fringe of elaborately-wrought lace, and then taking from a box upon the floor two tallow candles, and lighting them placed them at its head and feet, it required no subtle powers of penetration to see that she worked not for hire, unless indeed payment was to be taken in looks of heart-gushing gratitude and love. What mattered it that she was black, and that her features were not as delicately carved as those about her? (In the dusky shadow of the Great Reaper's presence, forms and colors were alike, and God, who seeth deeper than these, knows if at that moment her spirit likewise was not pure and white as theirs.)

I left my chamber noiselessly, and crept out unseen. The day was just beginning to break. It was a fresh, clear, breezy morning. As I slid along downward toward the beach, merry shouts came rolling up to greet me, and when I arrived among them, all was activity and bustle. The "poco tiempo" principle of the natives was for the time ignored by the resolute gold-seekers, determined to get on. Our matin hymn was "Wake up there," "Go ahead," "Clear the kitchen," and it rose to the melodious accompaniment of tin pans and portable cooking-stoves. Each was striving to be off first, and not a little gouging was going on in consequence, mingled with hard words and some unimportant skirmishes. Nevertheless, the scene was pleasant and enlivening, so suggestive as it was of cheery life and health and hope.

But I could not keep my thoughts from recurring sometimes to the bereaved couple whom I had left in the ranche upon the hill. In imagination I saw them fulfilling their last duties towards the precious remains of their darling babe, putting them beneath the ground, hiding them from

their sight for ever, and then, with faces turned homeward, going in quite another way from the rest of us, down the windings of that melancholy river alone.

Alone ?

CHAPTER XVIII.

GORGONA.

WE were well away from Palenquilla before sunrise. The crisp, cool air of the morning came winnowing over the river, its limitless wings dispersing fresh odors at every beat. Seated beneath our awning of palm leaves, having completed our ablutions in the stream beside us, and sipping the tiny cups of strong coffee, which Thom, in his bountiful providence, had prepared for us ; nothing could be more delightful than to feel ourselves thus gratefully borne onward towards our journey's end. So pleasant was the sense of overcoming the strong current of the river, so soothing its gurgling music as I hurried past, so refreshing the sweet scent from odorous woodlands on either hand, so majestic and beautifully solemn the view of palm, acacia, and thick-leaved mango, dark shadowing, and seemingly impenetrable at their base, with manifold bushes, creeping parasitical plants, and great bunches of old spongy moss, enlivened only in spots by scarlet or yellow blossoms, peeping forth like eyes of flame set deep into the front of huge, shaggy, slumberous behemoths of the wood, but with the golden sunshine just throwing a playful flicker over their topmost boughs, and making their wavy outlines so radiant up there against the clear blue sky !

✓ The glorious sunshine of the tropics—how my soul hankers after it here in my wintery New England home! ✓

“The cold and cloudy clime
Where I was born, but where I would not die”—

(for the present at all events). There is no other sunshine in the world like unto it. There may be, perhaps, a faint likeness in our early summer days, when there is wafted far from the sweet south, a softly mellow atmosphere through which it falls lovingly upon us from the cloudless heaven, broken into waves of light by a golden shimmer drifting through it, but oh, how faint at best! And again in the autumn, the Indian summer, there is an attempt to revive it.

“When come the warm bright days,
As still such days will come,
To call the squirrel and the bee
From out their winter home.”

But oh, how faint again—and comparatively speaking, ghastly in its surroundings of dead leaves and naked meadows, and how wanting in that depth and fulness which make the presence of this so dimly but so wholly satisfying!

But while we are bestowing ourselves thus happily—and so far silently, with the exception of Monsieur Crapolet, who is constantly performing solos upon his nasal organ, by way of putting an additional edge upon the olfactory nerve—it is quite otherwise with our boatmen. They, brave fellows that they are, have now come to “the hard part of the river,” as they term it. And hard indeed it is for them, where in shallow places and at sharp bends the stream fairly whistles as it spouts by in headlong speed. They ply themselves to their task nevertheless, with unconquerable determination. They have laid aside their shirts, and now, attired simply in trousers and sombrero, throw themselves bodily upon their bending poles, while the perspiration comes smoking from their deep chests, as they step steadily from stem to stern of

the struggling boat. The native boatmen in the other boats, which are constantly passing and repassing, sometimes getting aground in the bit of channel right ahead, and sometimes bumping up against us, with innumerable "carahos" on their side, and about an equal quantity of sturdy oaths in the vernacular on the part of our men—not having, I am sorry to say, an equal sense of what is demanded by the conventionalities of civilized life, go to yet greater lengths in disrobing themselves, and "so far as the curved line is the line of beauty," are certainly none the homelier for the arrangement. The imperturbable sang-froid with which they attend to this little item of personal accommodation, and the renewed satisfaction with which they return to their task, is quite a sight to behold. Then the horror or disguised merriment of the ladies, when there happen to be any in the same boat; or the look of comic perplexity with which the boatmen sometimes again encase their nether limbs when prevailed upon to do so by a liberal offer of aguardente or eau-de-vie from the gentlemen in attendance; it is really quite a commentary upon the morality of our social customs, and might furnish the text for a very respectable homily. Aguardente may or may not be a decent kind of beverage in its way, but for a Chagres native to expose his person in unadorned development, save for a ragged girdle about the loins, and that too in presence of eyes unused to the contemplation of naked beauties, though perchance not unfamiliar with the lorgnette at the Broadway or the Astor Place—preposterous! One's ideas of decency—you know.

And speaking of lorgnettes, imagine the narrator, backed up into a snug corner of the stern sheets of our barge, as if it were a corner box, and gazing through his visual organs, quickened in their powers by a concentration of purpose as by a lorgnette, at the performances in our little theatre

beneath the awning. It is quite curious to watch the play of characters upon the stage of my inspection.

There is Judge Smithers, for instance, tall, square-framed, large-featured, rollicking in good sense, the type of the frank, shrewd, honest, adventurous, successful American. It is a little remarkable that the judge should have taken such a fancy to the rowdy, dilapidated Colonel; yet they seem very much pleased with each other. The Judge, as I conceive, regards the Colonel as a fancy specimen of locomotive nature, and takes delight in trotting him out, and exhibiting his points to admiring spectators; and the Colonel, on his part, looks upon the Judge as a capital fellow, in his way, and makes quite a pet of him, as being exactly the sort of man he might have been, had he thought it worth his while to lay himself out, which, indeed, is quite natural, since it is, doubtless, within the experience of all, that we are apt to respect ourselves more for what we might have been than for what we really are. The Judge is a worker and dealer in the realities of life, and his career harmonizes with his ideas. The Colonel has a pleasant theory, that life consists of a series of pictures on the brain, and that the great thing is to keep that portion of the system in a soft and mellow state, that these may be imprinted with due effect; and this desirable result he has a trick of producing by frequent potations. The Judge has the handsome freshness of early manhood still upon him. The Colonel retains but little of his pristine beauty, and if it is not all turned to ashes, it is because the fire is still burning; but the ashes will come nevertheless.

Monsieur Crapolet, too—such a trump as he turned out to be, as a merry and thoroughly serviceable *compagnon de voyage*; one up to the rare trick of turning melancholy into a burlesque; he was the very ace of trumps; there was a

golden vein of childishness running through his manly character which the mere opulence of outward circumstances would have made look pale and mean; and this was the great charm about him, that just in proportion as he was poor, and weak, and utterly devoid of binding attachments to the world, he was rich, and strong, and joyous in the native resources of his genial temperament. He did not seem to have any particular thing to live for but the enjoyment of life itself. He impressed me as a man who had, as it were, ceased to recognise any high spiritual ends worth struggling for, and had given himself wholly up to the illustration of the glories and perfection of the physical. What he might have become had he married Virginie or *bien* Mathilde, encircled by certain conventional responsibilities, as he would consequently have been, I cannot say—certainly not the plump and perfect Monsieur Crapolet of the Isthmus. He would have been worth a fortune to the proprietor of a cheap eating-house in Yankee-land, to have merely stood, picking his teeth daily at his door, thus representing the general condition of the man who eat at his place, in contradistinction to nine out of ten of the passers-by, who were supposed to eat elsewhere; Sardanapalus would have gloried in him as a subject, so beautifully unconscious as was his elastic form of “the weight of human misery;” but had he been in the place of that humane and voluptuous monarch, I think he would have gone farther, and not content with seeing his people “glide ungroaning to the tomb,” would, in the technical language of the day, have sent them “smiling” to their latter homes. If Monsieur Crapolet had a principle or theory in the world, it was that we all owed a tremendous debt to nature, and that it would have been a grievous sin to have turned our backs upon the more generous kinds of nourishment which she daily offered us; and this was

exemplified every hour of his life, by his conscientious selection and consumption of the richest, and most invigorating of her juices, within the limits of his observation and means. So fully satisfied was he of the correctness of his favorite theory, that if any one had catechised him as to the whole duty of man, he would, doubtless, have responded, "liquidate;" and if he ever had occasion to sign his name, I feel morally certain that it would have read, as we often see signatures of mercantile houses in the London and Paris newspapers—"François Crapolet en liquidation."

We are all of us dreamers. Were it not for dreams, life would not be supportable; and Monsieur Crapolet had his dream—it was a darling day-dream. He had nursed and played with it so long and often, that at times he looked upon it as a reality—a dream of great wealth, that was one day to be his. He had very vague notions, if any, as to where this property was to come from, or how it was to come; but the amount was settled—"sept milliards"—and nothing remained but to lay it out in such a way as to get the greatest possible amount of enjoyment from it. It was a real treat the way this gentleman and Colonel Allen used to get hobnobbing together, while discussing this expectancy; the touching way in which the Colonel used to express a hope that it might come soon—"when," as he was fond of adding, "we will have some better liquor than this, Monsieur Crapolet;" and the calm, philosophic manner in which Monsieur Crapolet was wont to reply, with a shrug, "Parbleu;" thereby annihilating, at one blow, all doubts on that score, and concluding with an observation to the effect that the liquor was, however, very passable "*en attendant*." It would have been perhaps rather melancholy to have seen these two full-grown *hombres* (as Judge Smithers styled them) thus disporting with the world's serious things, but for a convic-

tion in my own mind that every man's existence is spent "*en attendant*" something, and that without some great life-long hope to buoy us up, we should hardly have strength to buffet the rude waves of life.

Tom, by way of presenting Thom to us in a new light, has taught this whilom taciturn individual to shout "*Caraho*," at a given signal, in the most approved style of native oratory. Tom sits across the boat's bow, with his feet dangling in the stream, smoking his pipe; and whenever a boat manned by natives passes us, either in ascending or descending the river, Tom gives the signal, and thereupon Thom shouts "*Caraho*" at the top of his lungs, which is answered by a deafening yell of "*carahoes*" from the aforesaid natives, filling the whole heavens with a horrible discord, so that even the sleepy alligators on the river's bank are fain to slide down under its surface, to escape the dreadful din. Tom explains this as "fun!"

But I think, on the whole, that the Judge is our most entertaining companion. In those graces of conversation which may be termed anecdotal, the Judge excels. His scenes are laid principally in Mexico and California, countries with which the Major is likewise familiar. I would like to introduce to the reader some of the Judge's stories, though I cannot vouch for his finding them as interesting as I did at the time; but I feel that it would be inconsistent with the plan of this narrative to do so here. If I have lingered thus long with our old friends, it is that we are now coming upon a new phase of Isthmus life. We are about to plunge, as it were, into the middle of the rush and tide thereof, and these our fellow-voyagers thus far will come up to our notice less frequently, and be seen less closely than heretofore.

It was past noon when we arrived at the little cluster of huts known as San Pablo. Here we were to dine. There

was a crowd of boats in before us, and the old padre's rancho upon the hill was completely besieged by the first comers; not that there was anything especially inviting in the nature of the refreshments for sale within, but from a kind of loafing habit, into which they had all more or less fallen, of patronizing every rancho along the river. The fact of their having paid a dime for a small cup of weak, muddy coffee, or a tiny glass of rum and turpentine, gave them the character of injured persons in their own eyes, and warranted their prowling moodily about the premises, pocketing an egg or two, if there happened to be any "lying round loose," or breaking through the picket fences, in agricultural explorations.

The padre was not at home, but his wife was—a formidable old lady, with a square, bony, masculine frame, and an immensely befrizzled head of hair, into which she occasionally stuck her lighted cigar, in the intervals of smoking. She was quite cool and business-like amidst all the rush of custom, serving out liquor and coffee with the air of a person who had a sacred duty to perform. She had two attendants, one of whom, a draggle-tailed, overgrown little girl, in a dirty white dress, washed the coffee cups by passing them through a tub of brown colored water upon the counter. Her face and hands (be it observed *en passant*) bore unmistakable traces of having been washed in the same liquid. The other attendant was a boy in shirt and sombrero, who made periodical visits to a neighboring hut in search of more coffee. This young gentleman was enough of a practical philosopher to believe in the motto, that he is rich whose wants are few, and returned a very decided "No" to propositions on various sides to take him along.

There was another personage in the padre's abode, who was not "one of us." This was a Spaniard, or Spanish

Creole of the Isthmus. He was a thin, wiry-built fellow, very dark and sallow, with black eyes and hair, and the never-failing moustache, habited in white pants, with long spur-mounted boots outside, a gay red and black striped poncho, with a red silk sash about his waist, and a neat, narrow-brimmed Panama hat upon his head. This picturesque individual lay smoking with a kind of Alexander Selkirk air, in the one sole hammock of the apartment. The coffee-bearer informed us that he was from Panama, and had come across since sunrise; and furthermore showed us his mule attached to the picket inclosing a plantain patch in the rear of the hut. This information gave us all a thrill of pleasure. We had reached that point in the Isthmus where the land route was practicable for mules at all events. The great weariness of our journey was over. "The day of our longing" was at hand, when we would test the capabilities of our favorite animals. We were really within a few hours' jaunt of Panama. In imagination we saw the broad surface of the Pacific, dotted with numberless green isles, lying still and golden beneath a softer sunlight, yet heaving inwardly with deep yearnings, drawing us thitherward. There was something in the scene about us suggestive of the same thing. The village of San Pablo is founded on a broad cleared plain, with here and there a few clumps of acacias and sycamores, throwing their grateful shadows on the green. Cropping the short herbage of this table-land, were cows, bullocks, goats, and sheep. It was a quiet, patriarchal-looking spot, midway on the Isthmus. The Chagres river, which makes a sudden turn at this point, was shooting madly towards the ocean in our rear, while immediately beneath us it was comparatively calm as an inland lake. Beyond the turning there was a precipitous gravel bank, which looked as if the river had at some time leaped up against it,

and torn the shrubs and verdure from its front. Above us, in the direction where our course lay, was a harmonious outline of tree and creeping vine, and pebbly beach, with the towering peak of Carabali, from whose topmost foothold it is said the Atlantic and Pacific may be seen at once, thrown up like a great drift of living vegetation to mark the spot where the winds of two oceans met in battle. But over all the landscape on the western hand, the unclouded rays of the sun were falling, illuminating the picture with a brightness that was typical of the golden treasures beneath the surface of that wondrous coast; while in the other direction, black festoons of clouds shut out the blue sky, and the vista of hill, and plain, and river, was hidden in storm and mist.

Dinner over—dinner!—some stale biscuit, tough dry cheese, purchased of the padre's wife, and raw slices of ham; think of that, ye habitués of Parker's and Delmonico's!—we again took up our line of travel. Judge Smithers, Colonel Allen, and Tom joined a party who were going to walk into Gorgona, and the rest of us returned to our barge. As we threaded the windings of the river, it hourly became more clearly evident that we were approaching the Pacific side; the air had become more dry and pure; clean grassy hills rose at intervals up from the river's bank, dotted with picturesque haciendas, fields of corn, rice, and plantains, and groups of domestic animals; sometimes we struggled past a wholesome sandy beach, where some sapient-visaged cows and flirty little horses would stand looking curiously at us, and where there would likewise be some native women washing and spreading out their white dresses on the sand to dry. But these were merely suggestive specks of civilization. The genius of uncontrolled vegetation was far from being entirely put down, and many a long sweep in the

river disclosed only a frowning and impenetrable hedge of forest on either side. Black wooden crosses, occasionally seen in the more open spots, where lay the remains of those who "by the way side fell and perished," hinted also that danger from disease was still dogging us like a cold unwelcome shadow.

The Major, missing the excitement of the Judge's reminiscences, suggestive as they had been of similar personal adventures of his own, and feeling, too, impressed with an awful sense of his responsibility, now that the camels were so soon to be put upon their pegs, was unusually silent and meditative. And Monsieur Crapelet, suffering from a like bereavement of his dear friend, Colonel Allen, was disposed to be altogether retrospective in his fancies, and pertinaciously edified as to what a distinguished and useful member of society he would have been had he been fortunate enough to marry "*Virginie, ou bien Mathilde.*" And whether it was owing entirely to this somniferous state of things, or in part to my having watched the whole of the preceding night; one thing is certain, that I soon fell into a sound dreamless slumber.

A roar and buzz of confused noises, jabbering of natives, shouts and singing on the part of more pretentious individuals, neighing of horses, lamentations of mules, barking of dogs, with a faint shade of melody as from banjo and tamborine, drifting through it all, awakens me. Our boat has come to a sudden stop in the midst of a hundred other boats. A long low sandy beach on my right, checkered with piles of luggage, prostrate forms, miners' tents, under-sized shingle palaces, and native huts; a steep embankment rising from it, adorned with similar styles of architecture on a somewhat larger scale; a thousand lights moving and glimmering everywhere—a promiscuous mass of animal life, brute and

human, swarming over the whole; on the other hand the deep dark silent woods, skirting the sluggish water of the stream on which we ride—all this, dimly lighted by the just rising moon, is the vision upon which my eyes open—and this is Gorgona.

Here comes a man with a bull's-eye lantern in his hand, striding across the boats which intervene between us and the shore, in the direction of our own.

"Seven sleepers ahoy!" shouts a well known voice.

"Hulloa, Tom! that you?"

"Hulloa, yourself—where have you been to this Dutch month?" responds Tom.

"Well, really—I—I rather think we have been aground, somewhere below here—Is it very late?"

"Low tide in the demijohn!" suggests Tom, turning his light upon the still sleeping form of Monsieur Crapolet.

Tom stoops over the boat's side, and drawing a calabash of water proceeds very tenderly to bathe Monsieur Crapolet's wrists and temples, and speedily brings that gentleman to a knowledge of his whereabouts. Monsieur Crapolet's first inquiry is for Thom, and his second is *of* Thom as to whether "there is anything left."

"But, Tom, where is the Major and our boatmen?" I inquired.

Tom replies, that they are below, assisting in landing the camels; that the Major and Judge Smithers propose stopping in the tents with our Moors till morning; and, as he assures us that it is some distance below, and that everything is going on right there, we follow his advice, and, leaving Thom to look out for our effects in the boat, take our very uncertain way on shore; not, however, before Tom has made glad the heart of Monsieur Crapolet, by producing a small flask of

what he, Tom, styles the veritable Otard, Dupuy & Co., from which we each take "a moderate quencher."

Tom is full of talk. Oh, he has been here full six hours—was in before sunset, in fact. Met with innumerable adventures on the road—got lost—saw a big snake—danced two fandangoes—helped to bury a native—shot a monkey—found a little pig—didn't belong to anybody, so brought him along—had him cooked for supper at the hotel—great times up at the hotel—Miller's railroad house—liquor rather so-so, but first-rate cigars—grand ball at the Alcalde's—all the aristocracy present—a party of Ethiopian serenaders at Miller's, assisted by a French girl, styled in the bills "*Mademoiselle Adele, la Rossignol Française*." So Tom rattles on pell-mell, leading one to surmise that Otard, Dupuy & Co. are the glasses through which everything appears so charming to him.

"But the greatest thing," adds Tom, "is, that one of our old college friends is here. Now, Warrener, who do you think it is?"

"Can't say, really."

"Why, Jack Tabor—brought up here—still seeking his fortune, after having been round the world two or three times since he ran away from Cambridge. What a wild devil Jack was—eh? Jack Tabor—old Quin. Oh, dear me!"

"You don't mean to say that Jack is in business here?"

"But I do," continued Tom; "and here is his house"—pausing in front of one of the more unpretending palaces, festooned above the door of which was what at first sight appeared to be a stout bit of rope, or a double-headed snake, but which we afterwards found to be an animal appendage significant of the name of the hotel—to wit, the "*Mule's Tail*."

A conversation of a bargaining character was going on

within. "Come," said a deep, powerful voice, which we instantly recognised as that of Tabor, "what do you say? Will you join us? We need three to do the business right. You can't do better—you know you're only a poor ragamuffin now. Here, take the pipe, and call the thing closed."

"The subscriber," replied a husky, tremulous voice, "don't need to be reminded of his poverty; although he may say that he has expectations, through a French cousin, who is heir to an immense estate, of seven hundred thousand million pounds sterling; and as for his costume, why, it ain't the best, he knows (the rascal was habited at the time in a miscellaneous assortment of dry goods, borrowed from the wardrobes of the Judge, Tom, the Major, and myself); but, Mr. Tapir, take the subscriber's hat on that, if he had the whole money he expects in his hands now, and was rigged up like a king of the Cherokee nation to boot, why, he'd go in with you, Mr. Tapir, in this business under con—consideration—he'd be so much yours, Mr. Tapir, that he'd have nothing left for himself. See small bills!"

Jack Tabor was leaning in his old well remembered manly fashion up against one side of his hotel, as we entered. Jack was the same tall, square-shouldered, full-chested, broad, clear-visaged man that I had known him years before. He was a little browner than when a student at Cambridge; a little more sallow, likewise, and wore a profuse moustache and very short hair; but he was as beaming and handsome a fellow as ever. Jack was attired loosely in cotton trowsers, shirt, and slippers, outwardly and physically, as doubtless inwardly and morally, in dishabille. Near Jack, and leaning up against the same side of the building, was another individual, not so prepossessing in his personal appearance. He was somewhat shorter, very much thinner, particularly in the neighborhood of the chest, with a slouchy, shirking look

about him, as if his frame had been bunglingly stitched together, in lieu of being fitted in the usual way, and an altogether hang-dog expression of countenance. He had a thin, seedy beard, a yellow skin, blood-shot eyes, and a general uncombed and unwashed appearance. He resembled Jack in one particular—his attire, which was of the same modest style, both as to quantity and quality. In all other respects, no two could be more utterly unlike. The third personage present—who was seated in a chair by a small table (the only furniture in the apartment, unless a row of movable shelves, adorned with bottles, decanters, and drinking vessels could come under that head), the reader has already recognised as Colonel Allen. Jack was, at the moment of our entrance, reaching over to remove a short wooden pipe from the mouth of his unprepossessing companion, preparatory to handing the same to Colonel Allen, that the bargain which had already been verbally consummated might be ratified on his part by a solemn smoke of the mutual pipe.

“Jack,” said Tom, calling his attention our way, “here’s another of the old guard, Joe Warrener.”

Jack turned upon us the same frank, genial look which had, in other days, been the admiration of the class.

“Shall it be hot whiskey-punch, gentlemen?” said he, taking a hand of each, and squeezing mine till it seemed to be fast in a vice.

We could do no otherwise than nod assent.

“But, Joe,” continued he, addressing himself to me, “you look shaky; never mind, a few glasses—*hot*, will bring you up. But what rosy god is this in your train; as far as one can judge by personal appearance, this might be Don Bacchus himself?”

I presented “Monsieur Crapelet”—

"My French cousin," murmured Colonel Allen.

"The rich expectant," said Jack. "Sir, I bid you welcome to the Mule's Tail."

"So you are actually established in the refreshment line at Gorgona ; eh, Jack ?" said I.

"True," said Jack, "and that reminds me. This gentleman," turning to Colonel Allen, "whom we have just admitted as a partner, you seem to be already acquainted with ; but so far as this gentleman goes, I believe you have not the honor," turning to the ill-looking man—"This is Captain Gaitey, gentlemen, a hero and a scholar ; a perfect gentleman, though he don't look like it."

An awkward suspicious nod from the Captain here illustrated the truth of Jack's latter observation.

"Captain Gaitey don't look very well just now, because he ain't dressed up," continued Jack, "but he is a very fine man. He has been almost everywhere and almost everything. His last business, previous to becoming a joint partner of mine in the Mule's Tail, was in the chain-gang at Havana. The Captain can tell you all about the horrible impositions practised upon foreigners, in the chain-gangs, by the miserable Cubans. Captain Gaitey, just pull up your trowsers a little, and show these gentlemen the marks of the iron on your legs."

The Captain's brow had been gradually darkening during this exposé of Jack's, and this unceremonious allusion to his legs was not at all to his taste.

"I don't tink," said he, speaking broken English, "dat dese gentlemen take any 'ticular interest in de personal condition ob my legs."

"Oh, yes, they do," persisted Jack. "They know you've been unfortunate, and they like you all the better ; haul up your trowsers."

But the Captain still hesitating—"Never mind now," continued Jack, considerately, "these gentlemen are in no hurry, some other time will do as well; and now go and get a pitcher of hot water."

Captain Gaitey, by way of proving to us that his legs, notwithstanding any indignity they might have suffered from the Cubans, were still in working order, set off with the pitcher in hand, and presently returned with the desired liquid.

We drank merely a couple of rounds, by which time both Tom and Colonel Allen began to show symptoms of going to sleep on the premises; and Captain Gaitey, not appearing in the mood to drop any crumbs of wisdom from his stores of experience for our edification, I proposed going up to the hotel for the night.

"Well," said Jack, "I guess it's about time; we usually close at half-past eleven, but it's a kind of a broken up night to-night, and it seems we've run along to near one. Lead off, Captain Gaitey, and show the gentlemen the way to Miller's—I'll shut up shop."

* * * * *

Jack—there's many a nodding reader will thank you for that suggestion. This narrative of mine is likewise a kind of a broken up affair, and it seems that I too have run along a little beyond the prescribed limits; it's time to shut up shop. Should the reader at any future day, following the morrow's example of Tom and Colonel Allen, manifest a desire to return to his or her soporific, I shall be most happy to deal it out, "time and tide" permitting.

Until then, dear companion of *my* pleasant moments—meaning, of course, the reader—fare thee well.

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